

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CHINESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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Ph.D.

University of Edinburgh

1995



DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed by myself and is my own original work.

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese Buddhist temple has been frequently discussed on a secular level, that is to say, in terms of its stylistic development, the details of its aesthetic, its socio-economic context, and so on. But the temple also has a metaphysical relationship with its transcendent source which has largely been ignored by recent literature. This thesis aims therefore to unveil this metaphysical connection between the physical reality of the temple and its transcendent origin: the religious symbolism which cannot be perceived except by the tutored mind.

In this symbolic schema, the Chinese Buddhist temple is regarded as a microcosm which allows the devotee to communicate with the higher level, and is the sacred place where Heaven and Earth, the sacred and profane worlds, are connected. It is the locus of the *axis mundi*, a vertical channel through which two complementary forces -- the proliferative centrifugal and the unifying centripetal -- are made manifest. As this thesis explains, at the heart of this perception of the temple are the doctrines of Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return. In the former, the Centre is denoted as the source of the universe from which originates the whole phenomenal existence of the world, including the embodiment of space and time, and the myriads of beings; in the latter, the salvation of sentient beings is said to lie in embarkation on a spiritual journey, which ultimately culminates in a "return" to the Centre.

Informed by these doctrinal formulations, the Chinese Buddhist temple is an ideal paradigm of these cosmic processes, which, in architectural terms, are embedded deep within its spatial organisation and outward form -- its orientation and axuality, the form of its individual buildings, and its iconography. This thesis therefore focuses on exploring the symbolism of these essential characteristics. In so doing, it not only provides ample substantiation for the original contention that religious beliefs are crucial influences upon the physical manifestation of the Chinese Buddhist temple, but also reveals just how omnipresent this influence is.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beloved supervisor Professor Christopher Barrie Wilson (1935-1995) to whom I owe a great debt of appreciation. Under his untiring and perfect guidance, I have been able to establish conclusively the structure of my thesis. I would like to express here my warmest thanks and deepest gratitude.

My sincere appreciation also goes to my supervisor Dr. Iain Boyd Whyte and to Dr. Bill Dolby of the Department of East Asian Studies, for their invaluable instruction and inspiration during the final stages of my thesis.

Regarding administrative assistance, I wish to thank all those who have generously offered their heart-warming help, especially Margaret Irwin and Jean Gorman. As for the financial support, I am grateful to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for granting me the Overseas Research Student Award.

Finally, I am glad to have here an opportunity to express my wholehearted gratitude to my parents, my wife Hsing-hua, and two daughters Wan-ting and Wan-ching, for their patient and constant support during the years of my studies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. SOME PROBLEMS WITH EARLIER STUDIES OF THE CHINESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

A quantity of literature has been produced in recent years which places the art and architecture of the Chinese Buddhist temple within the context of the stylistic evolution of Chinese traditional architecture, or explains it in terms of individual creativity and the relationship of this to the socio-cultural development of Chinese history. A typical example of this is *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture* in which Liang Ssü-ch'êng (梁思成) concentrates on relating the stylistic classifications of the Chinese Buddhist temple to those of Chinese traditional architecture. Similarly, another book, *The art and architecture of China* written by Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper, focuses on tracing the history of the art and architecture of the Buddhist temple throughout the whole history of Chinese architecture. Apart from these, there are many more making the same point and this is not the place to introduce them all.

Basically, these studies are all trying to classify the Chinese Buddhist temple stylistically by defining sequences of the architectural development and tracing its multi-cultural influence. That is to say, most of them concentrate on the issues which are explicit on the "'literal' and factual level" (Wilson 1984: 56): stylistic development (their age, their school, the identification of the painters, the sculptors, and the builder), aesthetic judgements (scale, proportion, materials), socio-economic circumstances (economics, climate, history) and so on.

Of course, the effects of these causal influences on the outer form of the Chinese Buddhist temple should not be underestimated, and it is quite legitimate to study them. However, it is important to realise that the most interesting properties of the architecture follow from its metaphysical relation with its transcendent source rather than from its relations with other phenomena on its material level. That is to say, the art and architecture of the Chinese Buddhist temple are determined to a certain extent by the influences looked at in earlier studies, but those influences cannot provide an explanation for their most essential characteristics which are highly dependent upon the religious teachings. As such, the quality of the temple should be judged primarily in terms of its functional value as a psycho-spiritual tool, and not by surface matters like aesthetic pleasure, the creativity of the architect, or its place in stylistic development. As C.B. Wilson reminds us,

"Traditional buildings are culturally and geographically specific but essentially a-historic. This does not mean that major traditional buildings cannot be dated or given a history, but rather that these are not inherently important properties of them,..." (Wilson, C.B. 1986b: 18).

Moreover,

"The aim of creativity in a traditional setting is not the invention of novelties but rather the completion of the journey to the source and origin of the tradition and back again into contingent manifestation. Change occurs in the latter -- in the accidents-- not in the archetypes. This is the return journey of anamnesis and its outward expressions." (Wilson 1988: 44)

This comprehensive study of the Chinese Buddhist temple therefore must reflect the inner faculty of the transcendent origin which is the main source of its symbolism. In order to achieve that, the exploration will have a different emphasis from that of most contemporary academic approaches like the current semiological theories of architecture, because a temple as a religious reality essentially possesses dimensions of meaning and a resonance of significance lacking in the everyday language afforded by linguistics and psycho-analysis.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the Chinese Buddhist temple with regards to its metaphysical functions requires an appreciation of the transcendent Reality and the Enlightenment as the truths of the religion (Wilson 1986a: 10-11). For example, understanding of the Buddha image, as the Ultimate Reality of Buddhism, requires a full awareness of its psycho-spiritual function: it symbolises an *axis mundi*, a path to attain the final goal, Enlightenment and salvation. Therefore, the Buddha image is not so much the expression of a human intimation, but an image of aspiration for the devotee. That is, the Buddha reveals himself on Earth.

To those who are fully aware of the true nature of the image, the surface facts, such as its aesthetic value, provenance, authorship etc., are either irrelevant or of little importance. Of course, as Wilson (1984: 56) points out,

"They have to be true in all legitimate particulars at each level; but what really matters is that they 'work' and this depends entirely on their ability to serve in the fulfillment of their highest function."

"Errors or flaws are acceptable the nearer to the 'surface' they occur, but the most perfect 'surface' is valueless unless it is fully centred by those essentials which flow down to it from above."

The true nature of the architecture of the Chinese Buddhist temple remains the same in principle as that of the art mentioned above, as Wilson (1984: 56) puts it,

"an adequate understanding of [the temple] cannot be gained by concentrating on questions of climate, materials, economics, style and so forth."

In all its characteristics, the temple architecture will have been conditioned essentially by the Origin and the Centre as revealed in the Buddhist dogmas.

On the whole, without any understanding of the truth of the temple, the real problems will continue to be avoided in favour of concentrating upon secondary economic and stylistic considerations. Therefore, in a comprehensive interpretation, we first have to acknowledge the basis of the religion -- the transcendent Reality and

salvation -- and, then, in terms of its metaphysical function, concentrate on exploring the symbolism which is embedded within the Chinese Buddhist temple.

1.2. THE METAPHYSICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE TEMPLE

In the last section, I have shown the true nature of the Chinese Buddhist temple by acknowledging the transcendent source -- the Truth¹ or the Ultimate Reality -- behind the temple, and pointed out the correct way to explore this traditional form of architecture, that is, by looking deeply into its psycho-spiritual function, rather than by concentrating on the matters of surface facts, such as stylistic evolution, aesthetic values, etc. In this connection, the metaphysical function of the Chinese Buddhist temple is the principal consideration in the interpretation of the temple. I shall discuss it in more detail in this section.

All manifestations in the cosmos, apart from their physical form, can also assume metaphysical significance. As Carl G. Jung (1964: 232) points out,

"The history of symbolism shows that everything can assume symbolic significance: natural objects (like stones, plants, animals, men, mountain and valleys, sun and moon, wind, water and fire), or man-made things (like houses, boats, or cars), or even abstract forms (like numbers, or the triangle, the square, and the circle). In fact, the whole cosmos is a potential symbol."

In this view, the visual form of all manifestations is regarded as an image of its essential archetype. As revealed in *Aitareya Brâhamana* (VIII. 2.),

¹ When the first letter of the word "truth" is written as a capital, it refers to "absolute" Truth rather than "relative" truth. That is to say, the Truth here, unlike the truths of science or the facts of history, does not lie in the plane of pragmatic or conditional truth but is a transcendent Truth. The capitalising of certain words in writing is a convention through which the distinction between two realms or metaphysical levels, e.g. between Principle and manifestation, Absolute and relative, Eternal and temporal, One and many, can be made. Moreover, capitalisation can also be used to emphasise the restoration of the traditional meaning of the word rather than to express the truncation of the modern connotation. This principle of capitalising certain words will be followed throughout the thesis.

"This world is the image of that, and vice versa." (Keith 1920: 8. 2. and Snodgrass 1985: 1)

On the whole, the entity of the essential form and the material substance is not only what can be perceived visibly, but also what it is known to symbolise. Here, the instinct to symbolise both has lead to and is reinforced by the concept of an ideal realm, a concept that has had currency in numerous cultures and religions. In other words, the metaphysical implication of all manifestations in the cosmos is often referred by human beings to religious symbol and is exploited in their religion.

As far as architecture is concerned, a building obviously satisfies a range of physical requirements in response to the psychological, emotional and aesthetic needs of men and women, and, more importantly, it is also informed by metaphysical demands, a concrete expression of the primary intellectual impulse -- that of finding order and meaning in the world. This primal synthesis in buildings of factual form and metaphysical implication is particularly alive in religious temples in traditional societies, which is one of the principal languages used by people to reassure themselves of their relationship with the transcendent Truth -- not just as it is at some single point in history, but essentially and timelessly.

Basically, the temple, or the architecture of a sacred place, is the embodiment of a particular symbolic spatial conception, and through this divine structure, cultural and religious values are expressed. In this sense, a religious temple is a result of the causal relationship between the ideal paradigm and the actual construction. Here, the causal relationship is reflected in the cosmological views of the Etruscan soothsayers (Cirlot 1962: 332), in which the division of the heaven was the reflection of the earthly space and was employed as a way of understanding earthly phenomena. Based on this spatial conception, the basic structure of the earthly temple is oriented by the ordered heavenly space. The temple as a whole is seen as a model of the celestial temple.

Since the earthly temple is deemed to be a full representation of the heavenly model, it is regarded as a sanctified structure separate from the profane world and its construction is undertaken to ensure the protection of sacred things from profanation. The symbolism is testified in the etymology of the word "temple" whose root -- *tem* -- means "to divide" (Cirlot 1962: 332). Moreover, as Eliade (1959: 59) points out,

"...the sanctity of the temple is proof against all earthly corruption, by virtue of the fact that the architectural plan of the temple is the work of the gods and hence exists in heaven, near to the gods. The transcendent models of temples enjoy a spiritual, incorruptible celestial existence. Through the grace of gods, man attains to dazzling vision of these models, which he then attempts to reproduce on earth."

Furthermore, Harold W. Turner, who attempts to uncover the characteristics of the spatial dimension of religious experience suggests four metaphysical functions of the temple as a model of heaven. That is, it is a Centre, a meeting point, a microcosm of the heavenly realm and an immanent transcendent Presence (Turner 1979: 18-33). And by saying that

"... the essentials of a sacred space for worship are location and spatial demarcation rather than buildings or other elaborations that come first to our minds" (Turner 1979: 15),

he points out that such functions can be clearly discerned in a sacred place regardless of the architecture that clothes it.

It is a commonly-held belief among people influenced by traditional religious culture on Earth that, by a proper channel and through a right place, Heaven is accessible. The proper channel here can be conceived metaphysically as a "vertical" cosmic axis that connects Heaven and Earth; and the right place is envisaged as the Centre of the world in which the cosmic axis is located. Through the channel of the Centre passes the *axis mundi* -- the origin of creation (the One) flow outwardly down all manifestations (the Many); the souls of the enlightened (the Many) flow inwardly

back to salvation and the Enlightenment (the One). Around these outward and inward motions, the temporal life of traditional people revolves. As Frithjof Schuon points out,

"The whole existence of the peoples of antiquity, and of traditional people in general, is dominated by two presiding ideas, the idea of Centre and the idea of Origin." "Everything in the behaviour of ancient and traditional peoples can be explained, directly or indirectly, by reference to these two ideas."²

Moreover, as Wilson (1986b: 13) puts it,

"Traditional societies and civilisations are not only religious, they are centred upon religion, and their temporal existence may be pictured as circling that centre."

If people are to pursue the eternal life, a balance between these outward and inward cosmic forces must be maintained. In other words, the loss of this central axis in the life of people is regarded as the loss of balance between the mundane and the supramundane; and as a result of that, people would completely lose contact with the Origin and be lost in the unknown future. But if they do keep faith with it, their life will be orientated towards maintaining balance with the Centre.³ The belief of keeping the balance between these two cosmic forces is considered as a spiritual landmark guiding the life of people in the measureless and perilous world of forms and of change.⁴

However, the ideas of the Centre and world axis are simple religious notions with no physical existence. The only way their presence is perceived is in phenomena. In other words, for people to be able to "centre" and thus proceed to the transcendent,

² Schuon's statement is of a principle (1965: 7). No actual traditional society conforms to it fully in every aspect of its life, but it provides a way of defining tradition and a basis for making generalised statements about traditional societies.

³ People's desire to maintain equilibrium with the Centre is also the reason for the characteristic coherence of traditional social structures, and for the remarkable continuity displayed in the forms of traditional social structure and personal life.

⁴ In simpler, but less accurate terms, this means that all life in societies of predominantly traditional culture originates in, and is based upon, religion.

these crucial spatial projections must be given a form in both spatial and temporal dimension -- a three-dimensional space and the fourth dimension (time). It would be wrong to suggest that the Centre is to be located in only one particular place with one special manifestation. As Wilson states, "By appropriate rituals the Centre can be established anywhere." (Wilson 1984: 52) Moreover, the centre can take any form be it a mountain, a tree, a temple, an altar, or even man himself.⁵ All these manifestations of the Centre, in one sense, can be sanctified as the "reflection" of the archetypal form of Centre and as symbols of supra-empirical levels of reality. As to the fourth dimension (time), the establishment of the Centre is timeless. A manifestation of the Centre occurs wherever and whenever a connection is made explicit between the transcendence of the Absolute and the mundane world of relativity and multiplicity.

In such a manifold analogy, the constructed temple which is directly informed by doctrinal formulations and thus makes its symbolic content explicitly manifest, is a clearer and more perfect reflection of principal relations and processes; and its outward form, which is usually that of "a gated enclosure whose boundaries exclude alien, disruptive influences, and frame an order which provides an orientation and a path to the Centre" (Wilson 1986a: 10), is a more cogent, direct manifestation of transcendent truths than others. In this way, the temple gives a particular and additional meaning to the generic symbolism that it shares with other architectonic structures. Being identified with the symbol of the mountain-top as the focal point of the interaction of the two worlds of Heaven and Earth, it becomes the tangible embodiment of the Centre.

⁵ As recorded in *I Corinthians* (3. 16-7), "know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"; and as the Buddha said to his disciples: "Verily, I tell you, the world is within this six feet high body." (Wilson 1984: 52) In this view, the human frame, the constructed temple, and the universe being analogical equivalents, the parts of the temple correspond to those of the human body no less than to those of the universe itself. All these dimensioned forms are explicitly "houses", indwelt and filled by an invisible Presence and representing its possibilities of manifestation in time and space. Sacred as such, religious man thus always seeks to live as near as possible to the Centre, because, he knows that, in this way, his country, city, temple, even his house lie at the navel of the universe and is an *imago mundi* (Eliade 1959: 43).

A well-oriented temple is capable of provoking a recollection of a supra-mundane paradigm and, because of this, is imbued with the sacred and able to express the manner in which the phenomenal world relates to the Real and how the One "fragments" into multiplicity. This facilitates the way to an intellectual vision of the break down of the duality of the principle One and the manifested Many, and thereby helps the devotee -- one of the "Many" -- to attain the state of intellectual consciousness which Coomaraswamy defines as that,

"in which there is no longer any distinction of knower from known, or being from knowing." (Coomaraswamy 1946: 41)

Therefore, as far as its spiritual function is concerned, the temple not only symbolises the Centre but is also used as a microcosm, an instrument of psycho-spiritual development along the centripetal and retraced path of cosmogenesis.

Essentially, the microcosm as an spiritual instrument has a two-fold function: it is an instrument made to be used and it is the mirror of the macrocosm. Firstly, as an instrument made to be used, each microcosm, the type and form of which obviously depends upon its intended use, is a reality of both cosmogenesis and a spiritual vehicle for travelling back to the ultimate Origin. To understand any particular microcosm, it is, in Wilson's words (1986a: 10),

"essential to keep in mind that, as well as conveying cosmological and psychological truths, it was made to be *used*."

For instance, geometrical configurations like the linear geometrical *yantra* in Hinduism and the structural geometrical *mandala* in Buddhism, both of whose use belongs to the particular spiritual discipline as an integral part of the meditational process, and of artistic and architectural reality, are explicitly microcosmic constructions with forms and uses that are well documented and are both revelations of Truth and a means to gaining it. Of course, there are countless examples in other cultures regarding the employment of microcosm as a spiritual instrument.

As to the microcosm as the mirror of the macrosom, the microcosm is the model which fully reflects this characteristics. Essentially, as Wilson (1986b: 17) points out,

"Everything has the potential of being whole in the special sense of mirroring the greater whole of which it is a part; everything, to a greater or lesser degree, actually or potentially, partakes of everything else".

In this view, each microcosm is seen as a small world embedded in the large cosmos (macrocosm). Although the microcosm is small in size, it, if being properly conceived in ritual ceremony, is however considered as the whole cosmos in action. Therefore, the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm "is rather like it is in a hologram; the whole picture is encoded in each fragment of the plate" (Wilson 1986b: 18; cf. Wilson 1986a: 15). That is to say, the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm means that reverberation between the two travel in both directions. In sum, the microcosm is not only regarded as an instrument employed in spiritual journey but also a representation of the cosmic process in both centrifugal and centripetal directions. Consequently, building a temple is a miniature of the whole architectural process of making a universe.

Apart from the temple, a human being is frequently employed as a microcosm. The idea of a human being as a microcosm lies in the belief that the human body, like the temple, is structured as a small world which can reflect the whole ordered cosmos. As Coomaraswamy (1977: 5) points out,

"The human frame, the constructed temple and the universe being analogical equivalents, the parts of the temple correspond to those of the human body no less than to those of the universe itself."

However, in the religious sense, a human being is regarded only as a "potential" microcosm. That is to say, although a human being possesses the nature of microcosm, it is not the case here that every human being is a true microcosm. Only a

human being whose nature is awakened is a genuine microcosm which can mirror the macrocosm -- the great cosmos.⁶ In sum, as Jacob Needleman has put it:

"Man is a microcosm, but I am not that man." (see Wilson 1992b: 67)

Furthermore, regarding the functioning microcosm, the internal, individual centering,

"can be externalised in the making of things which are an outward expression of being centred or of centred being." (Wilson 1984: 54)

That is to say, every object that humans make has the "potential" to become a microcosm: a centre which can be employed both to reflect the whole cosmos and as a vehicle of reintegration. Following the same principle mentioned above, whether the man-made object is a genuine microcosm or not, it is decided by whether the nature of the human being is awakened or not. If this being so, it means that the process of making is retracing the path of cosmogenesis.

In architectural terms, the microcosmic state remains as a principle when human beings design and construct the cities, settlements, dwellings, and temples. Although these architectures are different in scale, the principle is the same: each is built as a true microcosm making to symbolise the metaphysical Centre and axis, and to represent an order in conformity with the cosmogenesis. To sum up, as Eliade has written,

"Every construction and every inauguration of a new dwelling are in some measure equivalent to a new beginning, and a new life. And every beginning repeats the primordial beginning, when the universe first saw the light of day." (Eliade 1959: 57)

To fulfil its role as a Centre and a microcosm, the system of symbolism of the temple integrates a plurality of significance: it refers not only vertically to the transcendent reality of the Origin and Centre (the One) and the temporal reality of all

⁶ The nature of microcosm here is referred as the Buddha Nature in Buddhism which is regarded as indwelling innately in the inner centre of human being; and this nature can either be awaked or be asleep throughout the course of life. For those beings whose Nature is awaked, they are regarded as retracing the path of cosmogenesis back to the Origin; and their inner structure is regarded as a true microcosm which can reflect the macrocosm -- the whole cosmos.

beings (the Many) which belongs to a superimposed hierarchy of existences, but also horizontally to any being from among those levels of existences. As a result, the meaning embodied in the temple can be considered multivalent in essence both vertically and horizontally.

On the vertical plane, a causal relationship operates between the levels: the higher ones act as secondary causes to those that lie below. In other words, for those beings of the lower level of existences who made an effort in the course of life, they then ascended to the higher level of existences. Here, effort of beings forms the cause of ascent. As far as temple architecture is concerned, individual buildings of temple are therefore organised in accordance with the sequences of the superimposed hierarchy. On the horizontal plane, beings of the same level of existences are all related to each other like a network. By reference, every part of the temple "forms part of a pattern of concordant interrelationships" (Snodgrass 1985: 5). Consequently, all parts of the temple form a schema of interrelated symbolic referents, and produce a mutually reinforcing net of meaning. In this way, a variety of symbols will be incorporated within an overall integrated scheme.

In sum, the temple will function as a referent of both reality on a certain level of existence and corresponding reality on another. Here, the realities, i.e. the multiple states of beings and multiple state of existences, are thus regarded as so many reflections one of the other, since each in turn is a reflection of the Origin and Centre (the One), whence it derives. This whole metaphysical structure can be envisaged as "a stepped circular cone" with time travelling spirally around the circumference from the base upwards.

"The point at the top -- the high place -- represents also the innercentre where 'disputation (that is, duality or multiplicity) is abandoned in the true light'; while the lowest, outer circumference represents the 'surface' -- the literal, prosaic world of multiplicity; in Taoist terms, the world of the ten thousand things." (Wilson 1984: 55)

In reality, the image of this "stepped circular cone" is not only a simplified picture of the metaphysical structure of the cosmos but is also conceived as a physical and superphysical world out there which can be experienced and investigated as a physical phenomenon. Only on the basis of this kind of symbolism can a temple "transpose universal Substance to the world of accidents; and only by [having this character] can it provide a way back to the Centre and a path from earth to Heaven" (cf. Wilson 1984: 55; Frithjof Schuon 1975: 83).

Moreover, further to the notion of man as microcosm mentioned above, i.e. the belief that each person is structurally homologous to the cosmos, each human being also has this conelike form, metaphysically speaking, with the bodily senses and lower faculties of psyche towards the base and the highest spiritual faculty as the vertical descending from the apex. In this system, the apex of the cone in the human being is both the highest and the most inward, and the vertical axis represents the path into the manifestation of "what the being is in itself" as well as, inversely or centripetally, the path from the material to the most spiritual and the route from the outer sense to the innermost centre of being.

In summary, all things in the cosmos innately possess symbolic significance. That is to say, apart from their material existence, they also possess essential form. For instance, a building satisfies both physical requirements and metaphysical demands. This primeval synthesis in buildings of physical form and metaphysical function is animated essentially and timelessly in the religious temple which is the primal language employed by human being to communicate with the transcendent Truth.

As a result of the causal relationship between the ideal paradigm and the actual construction, the earthly temple is regarded as the heavenly temple on Earth, whose

structure is determined by considerations of order and orientation and whose construction is to ensure the protection of the sacred domain from the profane world. As an image of Heaven, the temple possesses four metaphysical functions: a Centre, a meeting point, a microcosm of the heavenly realm and an immanent transcendent Presence (Turner 1979: 18-33).

As a Centre, the constructed temple is considered as a sacred place situated at the Centre of the world, linking Heaven and Earth. In other words, the temple is regarded metaphysically as the channel through which passes the *axis mundi* : all manifestations (the Many) flow down from the Unity (the One), and the souls of the enlightened (the Many) flow back to salvation (the One). In this connection, apart from being the centripetal path of cosmogenesis (The One to the Many), the temple as a supra-mundane paradigm is also employed as a microcosm, an instrument by which the manifested Many retraced the path of cosmogenesis back to the Origin (the Many to the One). Here, the temple as the microcosm represents not only the cosmic process, but also, at deeper level, a structure that mirrors the ordered universe, the macrocosm. That is to say, building a temple is a miniature of the whole architectural process of making a universe.

To fulfil the metaphysical functions as a Centre and a microcosm, the symbolic significance of the temple integrates a system of plurality involving both vertical and horizontal dimensions. On the vertical plane, a causal relationship operates between the levels; on the horizontal plane, every part of the temple integrates into a schema of interlocking referents. The overall system of symbolism can be regarded as "a stepped circular cone" with time travelling spirally around the circumference from the base and, at the same time, upwards towards the summit of the cone. Only on the basis of the symbolic schema can a temple not only reflect the metaphysical structure of the

cosmos but also be conceived as a way back to the Centre and a path from Earth to Heaven.

1.3. THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

As explained above, the temple, which has metaphysically functioned as a Centre and a microcosm, assumes essentially both vertical and horizontal significance. Vertically, every part of the temple, or referent, assumes its symbolic significance in the superimposed hierarchy of existence which is bonded by a causal cause; horizontally, referents are inter-connected within a network system of meanings. In this connection, any part of the temple in this interlocking system possesses symbolism in both vertical and horizontal dimensions. In order to catch a full picture of the symbolism of the temple, it is necessary to approach by an integrative way of analysis. That is to say, the exploration should "leave its meaning 'open' and not confine it within the limiting configuration of a closed hypothesis" (Snodgrass 1985: 8). As a master of the Chinese Meditation school of philosophy puts it,

"to name something is to confine it, while merely to suggest it is to give it added power." (Jencks 1985: 234)⁷

Basically, the interlocking system of meanings in both vertical and horizontal dimension does not exhaust but strengthen the symbolic significance of the referent. In other words, the symbolism of the temple, which is revealed by a cohesion of meanings in both vertical and horizontal scales, represents, as a whole, a universal Principle. Therefore, as Eliade (1959: 97) points out,

"the search for symbolic structure is not a work of reduction but of integration. We compare or contrast two expressions of a symbol not in order to reduce them to a single, pre-existing expression, but in order

⁷ The statement is mainly used for exploring the expression of symbolism in architecture.

to discover the process whereby a structure is likely to assume enriched meanings."

Taking this approach, the correlated symbolism will be united and can be explored within a single referent. For instance, in terms of the form of individual building, the central post symbolises vertically the cosmic axis (*axis mundi*) which is a spiritual channel for the devotee to travel back to the Origin; at the same time, it correlates horizontally with other symbolism such as the cosmic Mountain (Mt. Meru), the cosmic Pillar that separates Heaven and Earth, the cosmic Tree which gives birth to all Buddhas, etc. (For details, see chapter 6) Here, the *axis mundi*, the cosmic Tree, the cosmic Mountain, and the cosmic Pillar are interlocked within the system of meaning both horizontally and vertically.

In some cases, an interpretative analysis from the viewpoint of a parallel religious belief may throw some light on the exploration of a particular referent, which is suitable in this case when the symbolism of the temple in question involves a variety of religious beliefs and philosophies. But again, the symbolism of the referent will be revealed in terms of both vertical and horizontal references. For example, in terms of spatial organisation, the North-South axis of the temple symbolises vertically the spiritual journey of the devotee -- *axis mundi* -- towards the Enlightenment, or the Centre; by reference, correlates horizontally with the Indian Brahmanist perception of the daily movement of the cosmic Sun which regards the ascending sun (*uttara-yâna*) moving towards the North and the descending sun moving towards the South (*daksina- yâna*) (For details, see chapter 5). Here the North, the highest point of the sun's orbit, represents the final destination of the spiritual journey. To sum up, it is precisely this model of inter-locking and inter-reflecting symbolism that this thesis attempts to explore. In short, the temple as a whole is embodied within an integrative symbolism and require an integrative rather than a selective approach.

Moreover, every religious referent such as the temple is internally seen as possessing a characteristic of supra-mundane origin, which is embedded essentially within the temple architecture at the beginning of the religion. Here, the ultimate origin is progressively established in the course of the growth of the religion and becomes the principle of the religion which remains inherent within the temple architecture. In other words, this religious import was embedded within the temple architecture regardless of the passage of time. As D. Allen (1978: 176) puts it,

"The 'cipher' of a symbolism carries in its composition all the values that man has progressively discovered in the course of centuries.... and history does not basically modify the structure of an archetypal symbols."

While facing the temple, it is only the awakened being who can reveal the true symbolism of this religious referents. However, if there is no such learned being at the particular time of history to uncover the religious meaning of the referent or it was not explicitly disclosed in documents, the temple still continues to deliver its religious messages to all beings. As Eliade (1959: 97) stresses,

"the validity of the [religious referent] does not depend on its being understood; archetypal symbolisms preserve their structures and reappear spontaneously, even unconsciously, in non-religious phenomena... they are present even if not consciously understood."

Therefore, to explore the symbolism in question which was evolved from the traditions of the Buddhism and the Chinese culture, requires a synchronic and non-historical approach. That is to say, when interpreting, we shall not take the temporal and factual factors into consideration. In other words, it is not necessary to ask:

"how many individuals in a certain society and at a given historical moment understood all the meanings and implications of that [religious referent]." (Eliade 1963: 102)

Because the symbolism was essentially embedded within the Chinese Buddhist temple, it will be revealed even if it has been concealed behind the religious referents for many generations.

In sum, the symbolism which the temple possesses was gradually built up in the course of the history of religion. Once it was established and was expressed outwardly by the concrete form of the religious referents, it remains inhered within this referent timelessly. The aim of the thesis is to reveal the symbolism which is formed from within the multi-traditions and has been concealed behind the Chinese Buddhist temple for ages; and the characteristics of the symbolism assumes this a-temporal way of interpretation.

1.4. MAIN SOURCES OF THIS STUDY

1.4.1. The significance of space and form

The earthly temple, as has been said before, is metaphysically functioned as a microcosm to mirror the macrocosm (the cosmos); and as such, its space and form are organised and designed, following the spatial and temporal prototype of the heavenly bodies above. As revealed in a Hermetic aphorism:

"That which is below is as that which is above, and that which is above is as that which is below." (Quoted in Wilson 1986a: 15)

This being so, the condition of the temple on Earth reflects directly that of Heaven above. That is to say, if the space and form of the earthly temple is well-

organised and well-designed, the heavenly bodies above will remain stable and in harmony. As disclosed in *Mahamata* (Quoted in Wilson 1986a: 15):⁸

"If the measurement of the temple is in everyway perfect there will be perfection in the universe as well."

However, the temple on Earth, whose space is poorly organised and form is incorrectly measured, will result in cosmic disharmony and cause a disaster resting on all earthly beings. In this view, it is essential that the architectural pattern of space and form of the earthly temple is regulated by its metaphysical function. What emerges from this is an archetypal temple with the religious doctrines applying to the details of its space and form.

To take space first, the three-dimensional space forms a principal medium for beings to perceive the physical world. In a religious sense, as has been stated above, for a devotee to "centre" and thus embark on the spiritual journey, a concrete form -- a constructed space -- which is a physical reality for conveying metaphysical notions is vital. In the construction of the Chinese Buddhist temple, space is the first consideration of the design. Here, the constructed space, or the temple buildings, are employed to render the spatial metaphors which abound in Buddhist literature. For example, space of the Chinese Buddhist temple is organised in accordance with the four cardinal directions, symbolising the temple is situated at the Centre of the world. When space of the temple is organised towards the South, it means that the temple is oriented to embrace the life and light of the South and prevent the evil influence coming from the North (For details, see 5.3.2.). Moreover, a group of five pagodas, which are deployed as follows -- one pagoda is placed at the centre and the remaining four are located in four quarters, symbolise the Buddhist idea of *mandala* (For details, see 5.4.). Here, the layout of the pagoda group is also oriented in accordance with the four cardinal directions.

⁸ *Mahamata* is one of the building manuals of Hindu architecture (Dagens 1970).

When it comes to form, the temple, if it is to function in harmony with the law of the cosmos, must comply with the metaphysical mathematical system or geometrical phenomena. As Snodgrass (1985: 9) explains,

"meanings are not 'read into' symbols or added to them as a conceptual garnish. On the contrary, they are deemed to inhere within the form of the symbol in a manner analogous to that in which natural laws inhere within physical phenomena, or as mathematical principles reside in the very nature of numerical or geometrical phenomena."

Moreover, as Le Corbusier (1927: 65-6) points out,

"All construction, whether a primitive hut or temple is governed by elementary mathematical calculation."

In the case of the Chinese Buddhist temple, form of individual building and iconography are determined by those metaphysical principles. For example, the storeys of the Chinese pagoda, in numerical terms, corresponds to the cosmic spatial directions and the spiritual stages. The five-storeyed pagoda signifies not only the four cardinal directions and the Centre, but also five religious stages along the path towards the Enlightenment (For details, see 6.3.). Moreover, to comply with metaphysical geometrical reality, the cave temple is a prominent example. The dark cave symbolises the sacred space for initiation; and the geometrical outline of its structure represents the Egg of Ignorance (For details, see 6.5.)

In sum, the temple is an image of Heaven. The condition of the temple, whether it follows the principle of heavenly bodies above or not, directly informs the harmony of the heaven. That is to say, a cosmic discord is caused by the badly designed temple; and a well-designed temple results in cosmic harmony. In short, the temple is built to reflect Heaven, and the design of the temple has to be "right" at all levels. In terms of the metaphysical function, the temple operates as an intellectual

bridge between Heaven and Earth, the sacred and profane world, the supra-mundane and the mundane. Its space and form is the concrete evidence of the ordered universe.

In the case of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the symbolic effectiveness of the temple depends upon the deference of its builders to religious tradition. That is to say, not only the space of the temple has to be organised as does the time of its construction, orienting with regards to the four cardinal directions, and addressing Buddhist ideas such as the *mandala*, but also its form has to be determined by the metaphysical mathematical system and geometrical phenomena. The significance of the Chinese Buddhist temple, therefore, integrates in its space and form, representing the religious ideas which cannot be perceived except by the realised mind.

1.4.2. Doctrine, myth, and ritual

Apart from architectural space and form, both of which are the exoteric side of symbolism, the web of symbolic cognates is also expressed esoterically in myth, ritual and doctrine. Through the exploration of this esoteric side of symbolism -- which is the main source of this study -- we may obtain the truth of the architectural symbolism.

Essentially, doctrine is regarded as an esoteric medium through which religion reveals its belief conceptually. Through the exploration of the doctrine, the devotee will understand the truth of the religion. In other words, doctrine is functioning to assist the devotee to perceive the true meaning of religious beliefs. In manifestation, doctrine is expressed in writings which normally consist of three categories of documents: canonical writing, religious discipline, and commentaries of the prestigious devotee. By following the principle, the doctrine of Buddhism is

composed by three major divisions (*Tripitaka*): doctrinal books (*sûtra*), works on ecclesiastical discipline (*vinaya*), and philosophical works (*abhidharma*).

As far as their contents and their Chinese version are concerned, firstly, the doctrinal books include the collection of all canonical texts which, in China, are divided into Mahâyâna Sûtra, Hinayâna Sûtra, and Sung (A.D. 960-1279) or Yüan (A.D. 1279-1368) dynasty Sûtras (Ernest J. Eitel 1904: 166); secondly, the works on ecclesiastical discipline contain works on ascetic morality and monastic discipline which, in China, are divided into Mahâyâna Vinaya and Hinayâna Vinaya (Ibid.: 202); thirdly, the philosophical works comprehend all philosophical works which, in China, are divided into the Abhidharma of the Mahâyâna school, the Abhidharma of the Hinayâna school, and the discourses included in the canon during the Sung and Yüan dynasties (A.D. 960-1368) (Ibid.: 2). Therefore, in order to catch the true meaning of the Buddhist belief so as to uncover the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple, one must resort to the study of the religious documents, which covers all three divisions mentioned above.

However, it is important to recognise that even in a highly-developed religion not all its ideas are transcribed in writings. It is because these ideas which contain multiple levels of meaning can not be fully preached in words. It is especially so when the belief in question possesses an esoteric nature. Indeed, in a religion where ideas are mainly propagated by oral transmission, it is difficult to trace its esoteric side of symbolism without the support of documentary evidence. Fortunately, there are sources to be explored without doctrine, namely myth and ritual, which often explicitly manifest an esoteric nature.

Outwardly, myth is expressed in a narrative and verbal mode; essentially, it is a metaphysical language employed to reveal the religious belief that lies beyond

words. That is to say, myth is a spoken narrative which unveils the meaning which lies behind the religious ideas silently and timelessly. Symbolism is reflected in its etymology: myth (*muthos* in Greek) derived from its Greek root *mu*, meaning "to speak with the lips closed" (Guénon 1953: 125). In sum, myth is "the proper language of metaphysics" (Coomaraswamy 1946: 122), functioning to uncover the indescribable religious belief in a narrative way; and because of its significance in eternity, it is used to reveal the transcendent Truth and the primordial cosmogenesis.

As to ritual, it functions to unveil the inward and gnostic side of religious belief, as does myth mentioned above. In manifestation, other than the narrative way of myth, ritual is expressed by a series of bodily gestures and words. In other words, when performed, ritual uncovers the metaphysical religious ideas in its every bodily and auditory action. In association with architectural referent which expresses metaphysical religious belief in a fixation of spatial and formal mode, every ritual gesture is regarded as putting this motionless mode into motion. That is to say, in terms of its metaphysical function, the architectural symbol is itself a rite. Moreover, in connection with myth, the performance in ritual ceremony repeats the sacred actions described in mythical narratives.

On the whole, the exoteric architectural symbol and the esoteric doctrine, myth, and ritual are the interrelated expressions of one single reality. In other words, they form a theoretical framework within which a wide range of religious ideas can be connected and explained with regards to their transcendent dimension. As such, as Wilson (1992b: 66) points out,

"[This framework] can often provide a support for an explanation both philosophically by making sense of an otherwise inexplicable phenomena and comparatively by drawing on analogous but better-understood phenomena from other tradition."

The aim of the thesis is therefore to exemplify, by way of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the manner in which the space and form of the architecture are symbols and serve to express metaphysical notions. The thesis does so by reference to myth, to ritual and to doctrine, viewing the architectural space and form from within the conceptual framework of the religion to which it belongs; and by using integrative and synchronic approaches, the study attempts to analyse a pattern of interrelated meanings generated by the Chinese Buddhist temple throughout Chinese Buddhist history.

1.5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

According to the history of the spread of Buddhism, when Indian Buddhism was first introduced into China it became infused with certain ideas from Chinese philosophies, and subsequently, the Chinese brand of Buddhism and Buddhist schools gradually emerged. In course of time, these hybrid Buddhist beliefs which involve four distinct religious belief systems -- Indian Buddhism, traditional Chinese philosophies, Chinese Buddhism, and Chinese Buddhist schools -- were sufficiently deeply engraved on the Chinese mind to affect people's daily lives and influence architecture as well.

Various beliefs and philosophies are embedded within the structure of the Chinese Buddhist temple as such, and these, of course, have had a major impact upon the design of that temple. For instance, as the Meditation school (Ch'an-tsung), one of the leading schools of Chinese Buddhism, the teaching of which I shall discuss later in 2.5.1., grew stronger and the other schools declined during the tenth and following centuries, it took over one temple after another and adjusted the existing premises, rather than erecting new ones. In course of time, a great number of temples became Ch'an temples (*ch'an-ssû* 禪寺). After the transition, the original elements in the

design of these temples still dominated, even though the religious belief embodied in the temple had become that of the Meditation school.

Apart from the temples of the Meditation school, influential abbots elsewhere, who were elected as the new leaders of temples which had belonged to other sects, also erected new buildings within those temples to meet their own ideas. The fact that the temples were able to accommodate this diversity of ideas was largely due to the predominance of one central belief: that humanity, wallowing as it is in the deepest state of ignorance, cruelty, sin and misery, should use all available methods they can to obtain deliverance. Therefore, regardless of the differences of opinion of the various schools about how salvation (*nirvâna*) was to be reached, from the point of view of the devotee, the temple remained the focus for a combination of worship and meditation which was more or less constant and was the dominant influence in terms of design.⁹

This constant element even survived the input of various Chinese philosophies which nevertheless did contribute to the complexity and variety of temple design. For example, in the fifteenth century, Taoists occupied four hundred and eighty two Buddhist temples, used them, and modified them, before returning them to the Buddhists some years later (Prip-moller 1937: 2).¹⁰ But changes and variations in religious belief were not the only determining factor. We may sometimes find atypical temple plans that simply result from the individual taste of an abbot, and his ideas about how best to achieve prosperity for that temple. In addition to this, the pious donor himself sometimes influenced decisions, such as whether a seat or hall of

⁹ Only in small and remote places where one or just a few selected monks live together in extreme simplicity and abstinence, may one meet the "pure" temple which still keeps its faith in a special school.

¹⁰ Taoism is one of two major traditional Chinese philosophies, the ideas of which I shall discuss later in 2.3.3. The other one is Confucianism.

honour was given to the patron deities, or as to which deities these might be -- both measures possibly changing the character of the temple plan.

A unique example of the former type of influence is given by H. Maspero in his description of Chen-chio-ssû on T'ien-t'an-shan:

"This temple is built around the grave monument of the monk Chih-yi, which occupies the centre of [the great Buddha hall]. For this reason the usual image of Sâkyamuni is not found here but is moved to [the heavenly kings' hall] in front..."¹¹

An example of the influence of the latter, the donor, was Ch'i-hsia-ssû near Nanking where the image of the Buddha Vairocana (Pi-lu-che-na)¹² was placed in the Great Buddha Hall. The arrangement is not unusual, but the decision to adopt it was, as the monks there said, due to the special wish of the donor of the hall.¹³ In this way, although the temple halls remained the same in terms of quantity and location, the character of the temple became different. Therefore,

"it will not be the grouping of the buildings which will indicate to which school a temple belonged. The images which it possess and their location within the temple will often be the better indication it possesses of its theological tenets." (Prip-moller 1937: 3)

The evidence mentioned above suggests that Johannes Prip-moller is right when he (1937: 2) points out that

"...no two Buddhist [temple layouts] are alike and that a number of factors, the character of all of which have not yet been fully elucidated, have worked together in creating the great variations in details... behind all these differences lie the outlines of the Buddhist temple, growing out of the seemingly somewhat chaotic and heterogeneous mass of courts and halls, placed apparently on varying principles in the various temple of which they form a part." (Prip-moller 1937: 2)

Moreover,

¹¹ The account is given by H. Maspero in *Bulletin Ecole Francais d'extreme Orient*, XIV, 1914, p. 65 (see Prip-moller 1937: 3). Here, the Sâkyamuni is the founder of Buddhism. As to the Heavenly Kings' Hall and the Great Buddha Hall, I shall discuss them later in 5.4.2. and 5.4.4.

¹² For details of the Buddha Vairocana, see below 7.4.1.

¹³ The account is acquired by the investigation of Prip-moller (1937: 3).

"[The individuality of a school] does not reveal itself completely and at once to the visitor in most of the temples belonging to [that school]. Thanks to [the amalgamation] between plan design of the schools which has been going on for centuries, very few temples will be of a 'pure' design when seen from the 'school' point of view." (Ibid.)

On the whole, the amalgamation of various beliefs and philosophies in the individual temples appears to result in many irregularities. It would seem very difficult to establish the prototypical system of the Chinese Buddhist temple simply by referring to its appearance, instead of its essential structure which is designed to reflect a religious belief system. Therefore, in order to achieve the investigation of the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple, we must resort to the measuring of a series of archetypal features which are manifested, in terms of space and form, in the inner structure of the existing temple. Only by this approach will we be able to reach the transcendent Truth which is embedded deeply within the Chinese Buddhist temple.

Based on the principle of an archetypal model which reveals the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the thesis is structured as follows. First, in order to establish a sound theoretical and practical basis for the exploration, in chapters two and three, the diversity of Buddhist religious teachings and the plurality of the architectural manifestation of the Chinese Buddhist temple shall be briefly introduced. The religious background of the Chinese Buddhist temple discussed in chapter two includes all the doctrines and beliefs involved, namely, Indian Buddhism, traditional Chinese beliefs, the basic beliefs of Chinese Buddhism, and the schools of Chinese Buddhism. In the investigation of the architectural background of the Chinese Buddhist temple in chapter three, the discussion will uncover the evidence of the early spread of the Buddhist temple in China, and introduce the architectural classifications of the Chinese Buddhist temple, including the cave, pagoda, and pavilion temples. Moreover, in the same chapter, the religious functions and essential characteristics,

which have been active in moulding the essence of the Chinese Buddhist temple, will also be discussed.

On the basis of an analysis of these essential characteristics, the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple will be explored, with regards to space and form, in the following chapters four, five, six, and seven, which form the main body of the thesis. In both chapters four and five, the exploration will be focused on the symbolism of the spatial organisation of the Chinese Buddhist temple, in terms of the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return, which are two principal doctrines involved in the discussion. The symbolism, embedded within the orientation of the temple which includes the orientation of the temple compound, the *mandala* manifestation, and the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon, will be discussed in chapter four; the symbolism, embodied within the axuality of the temple which includes alignment with the N-S and E-W axes, the hierarchy of buildings on the central longitudinal axis, and the cremation and meditation ceremonies, will be examined in chapter five. In both chapters six and seven, the exploration will be concentrated on the symbolism of the form of the Chinese Buddhist temple. The symbolism, embedded within the features of individual buildings which include the central post, the number of storeys, the roof spire, and the cave, will be explored in chapter six; and the symbolism, embodied within the iconography which includes the wheel, the lotus, and the images, will be analysed in chapter seven.

In sum, the temple, as has been explained above, can not only manifest its physical existence, but also assume metaphysical significance, its links with the transcendent Truth, and it is this metaphysical significance which is the main concern of this thesis. However, for the Chinese Buddhist temple in question, the diversity of beliefs and philosophies which apply in individual temples and result in the plurality of the architectural manifestations, make the interpretation very difficult. In this

circumstance, in order to reach the profound symbolism which is embedded within the Chinese Buddhist temple, it is necessary to establish an archetype by exploring the essential characteristics which it embodies, rather than the details of its appearance.

Therefore, following this introductory chapter, I address briefly in chapter two the various relevant beliefs of Chinese Buddhism as a background to the study. In chapter three, I look at the manifold architectural manifestations of the Chinese Buddhist temple and, by exploring its essential characteristics, I seek to establish the archetypal model of the temple, which then enables me to proceed in the exploration of the symbolism in the following chapters four, five, six, and seven. In these chapters, the religious teachings applied are the doctrines which are valid in all the beliefs involved, namely, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre and that of Ultimate Return. The essential characteristics explored are, the aspects of orientation and axially, the form of individual buildings, and the iconography; from these we gain a full picture of the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple. Regarding the presentation of the main texts of the thesis, the main concerns of each chapter will be epitomised first in the introductory section, and elucidated subsequently.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Chinese Buddhist history, Buddhism had entered China by the beginning of the Christian era. After its spreading there, the Indian-originated religion tended to adapt its ideas within the context of the established Confucianism, which advocated practical secular values, and the mysticism of Taoism.¹⁴ As shown in Figure 2.1., the founders of three leading religions (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) were sometimes worshipped on the same Buddhist lotus throne.¹⁵ In course of time, Buddhism developed into a sinicised religion, which derived qualities from both Indian Buddhism and traditional Chinese beliefs.¹⁶ The aim of this chapter has been to uncover these sinicised religious ideas which form the religious background of the Chinese Buddhist temple, and are the source of its symbolism, the main subject of this thesis.

¹⁴ During the first and second centuries A.D., the religion was initially considered to be very similar to traditional Chinese beliefs such as the Confucianism and Taoism (For brief a discussion of these two beliefs, see below 2.3.2. and 2.3.3.). In the third and fourth centuries, an increasing number of Buddhist texts was translated, and Buddhism became better understood, but it was still regarded as similar to philosophical Taoism. It was not until the fifth century, by which time the flood of translations of Buddhist texts was rapidly increasing, that the Chinese began to appreciate Buddhism as a separate religion rather than merely a Chinese-like strand of belief (For a discussion of the accommodation of foreign Buddhism into the Chinese mind in the early years, see Joseph Needham 1956: 407-9). But still, even then, Taoist terminology was sometimes employed to express Buddhist ideas (Cf. 2.5.2.).

¹⁵ In fact, religious ideas, symbols, and deities have been mutually "borrowed" in the course of development of all religions. At a popular level in China, as Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (1984: 180) point out, "veneration is, or was, paid to the shrines of all religions."

¹⁶ The Indian-originated religion had entered China, and been widely propagated for several centuries, before any Chinese Buddhist schools were set up. In the course of time, the sinicisation of Buddhism was achieved: a synthesis of Buddhism and traditional Chinese beliefs began to emerge and eventually Chinese Buddhist notions like the doctrine of salvation (i.e. the doctrine of the Mahāyāna Buddhism), the cosmology and sectarian Buddhism were created. It is this heterodox collection of religious ideas, known as Chinese Buddhism, formed by the combination of the original Indian Buddhism, traditional Chinese ideas and newer Chinese Buddhist doctrinal, cosmological and sectarian ideas, from which the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple originated.



Figure 2.1. The founders of the Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, seen seated within the petals of a lotus flower (Powell 1979: 8)

Concerning the background ideas, Indian Buddhism, in the course of setting up its conceptual system, inevitably either adopted or adapted the ideas of its own antecedent, Brahmanism. The ideas adopted include the notion that deeds (*karma*) in this life determine one's incarnation in the next, the micro-macrocosmic link between man and the universe, and the idea of cyclic existence; the adapted ideas include the emphasis on a moral life, the acknowledgement of the doctrine of emptiness (*sûnyata*), and finally, the idea that a being could be reborn in any level of existence above the earth (in Heaven), or below (in Hell). As to the religious life of the devotee, Buddhism renounced both village life and the wandering life, and chose the Middle Way.

In its interpretation of the teachings of the Buddha, Buddhism developed two principal doctrines: the early Hinayâna and the later Mahâyâna. In its depiction of the pursuit of salvation, Hinayâna Buddhism focuses on the individuals who join the strict monastic order; whereas, in Mahâyâna Buddhism, all beings are regarded as potentially enlightened. Reflecting these characteristics, both introduced their concepts of ideal saintship -- the Arhathood in the case of Hinayâna Buddhism, and the Bodhisattvahood in the case of Mahâyâna; and both have their own version of the Buddhahood -- a human teacher in the case of the former, and an eternal being in the case of the latter.

As to traditional Chinese cosmology, it was well established before the spread of Buddhism into China. According to this cosmology, the universe is constituted by three indissoluble components -- Heaven, Earth, and Man. In China, each of these components is represented by a supernatural being, namely, the Heavenly deity *shang-ti* (上帝, "God on High"), the Earthly deity *t'u* (土, "Soil"), and the Human Spirits *jen-kui* (人鬼, "Spirits of the Dead"). Special temples were built to worship each of

them, namely, the temple of Heaven *shih-shih* (世 室), *ch'ung-wu* (重 屋), or *ming-t'ang* (明 堂), the temple of Earth *she* (社, "Altar of Soil"), the temple of Man *tsu* (祖, the ancestral temple).

In the Chinese view, the harmony between the trinity directly informs the consonance of the universe. Consequently, the traditional Chinese belief systems developed later, such as Confucianism and Taoism, are all trying to find the right way to maintain the harmony between the trinity. Of these two philosophies, Confucianism introduces an ethical social system which maintains order, stability and harmony between the trinity, which is here represented by the ruler, the ministers, and the masses. Taoism, on the other hand, establishes the concept of the invisible and omnipotent Tao in order to sustain the order of the trinity, or the universe. At the popular level, Taoist religion sought to transfer the transient individual life into eternity, by practising physical, alchemical and pharmaceutical exercises to achieve material immortality. In sum, as reflected in these two philosophies, the intimately interrelated trinity has social repercussions as well as cosmic implications. These two philosophies, reconciled and shown to be complementary to each other, are deeply embedded in the life of Chinese people.

Evolved from Indian Buddhism and the traditional Chinese beliefs, Chinese Buddhism, in its doctrine of salvation and cosmology, inevitably inherited certain ideas from its origins. The doctrine of salvation of Chinese Buddhism was a successor to that of orthodox Indian Buddhism, focusing on the preaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Path. On the basis of these Truths and this Path, Buddhism regulates the monastic disciplines, which include moral conduct, mental control and intuitive wisdom that devotees must follow in their spiritual journey towards salvation. Buddhism also inherited the idea of the cycle of rebirth in which twelve primary

causes and the secondary results of these deeds form a chain. In the Buddhists' view, exemption from the chain means the attainment of salvation, or *nirvâna*.

In cosmology, Chinese Buddhism, based on the framework of the Indian Buddhist cosmology, introduces a three-region system -- Heaven, Earth and Hell. Of these three realms, Heaven consists of three major divisions, which are subdivided into six, seventeen and four tiers respectively, and Hell consists of eighteen tiers, which are grouped into ten courts. Beings who dwell within the system are categorised into six orders -- heavenly gods, human Beings, *asuras*, animals, ghosts, and damned beings. Of these, the Heavenly gods abide in Heaven; the human Beings, *asuras* and animals on Earth; and the ghosts and damned beings in Hell. Before escaping from the cycle of rebirth, beings wander ceaselessly around the lowest division of Heaven (Devaloka), and the Earth and Hell regions, and appear in the existences of gods of desire, human Beings, *asuras*, animals, ghosts, and damned beings (cf. Table 2.3.).

With its sinicised ideas, Chinese Buddhism developed a variety of schools by the end of the seventh century, of which the Meditation school (Ch'an-tsung 禪宗), the Pure Land school (Ching-t'u-tsung 淨土宗), the T'ien-t'ai school (T'ien-t'ai-tsung 天台宗), the Hua-yen school (Hua-yen-tsung 華嚴宗), and the Tantric school (Mi-tsung 密宗) are the primary ones. In the view of the Meditation school, salvation lies in awakening the inner Buddha nature; for the Pure Land school, it resides in having faith in the Buddha who presides over the Pure Land. The T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen schools, in defining their way of achieving salvation, stress awareness of the truth of the noumenon (*li* 理) and phenomenon (*shih* 示) of things, so as to avoid the state of craving. The salvation of the Tantric school lies in the performance of magic formulae, rather than in sutra learning.

In practice, the Meditation school emphasises the intuitive method of spiritual training; the Pure Land school focuses on the continued recitation of the name of the governing Buddha of the Pure Land. The Tien-t'ai school introduces the cultivation of *chih* (止, or "Concentration"), and *kuan* (觀, or "Insight") so as to understand the truth of things. The Tantric school concentrates on the practice of magic formulae -- *mudrâs*, *mantras*, *abhishekas* and *mandalas* -- to invoke the gods and achieve sudden salvation. Although approaches differ between the schools, the final aim of all is the same -- exemption from the cycle of rebirth and attainment of the state of *nirvâna*.

2.2. INDIAN BUDDHISM

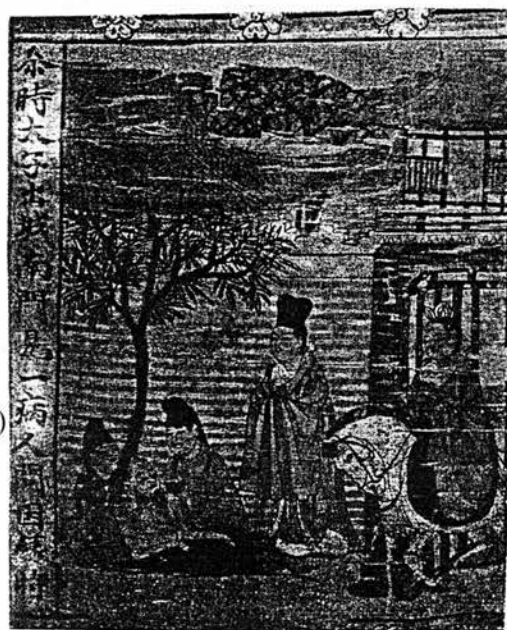
2.2.1. The birth of Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Sâkyamuni, a former prince of the Indian Kshatriya clan of the Sâkyas. He was born in ca. 563 B.C. Apart from his official name Sâkyamuni (the "Sâkyan Sage"), he was also known as Sâkya-simha (the "Lion of the Sâkyas"). Moreover, his personal name was Siddh-ârtha, the name indicates the fulfilment (*siddha*) of the desire (*artha*) of his father for having a son (Debala Mitra 1971: 1, n. 2). In Buddhist circle, he was honoured as the Gautama Buddha which, in this thesis, is abbreviated to "the Buddha".

According to the legend of the Buddha, his mother Mahâmâyâ, when she was carrying the baby, had a dream that a white elephant entered her body (Figure 2.2.). The auspicious sign -- the entering of the white elephant into the womb -- indicates the child "was destined to become either a universal monarch or a Buddha" (Mitra 1971: 1). As an Indian prince, Sâkyamuni was brought up amidst luxuries and pleasures. In other words, during his childhood, he remained sheltered from all unpleasantness.



Figure 2.2. Dream of Queen Mārâ (Mitra 1971, fig. 1)



(Sickness)



(Old age)

Figure 2.3. The prince leaves his palace and encounters old age and sickness.
From a Chinese painting on silk (Bechert and Gombrich 1984 : 21)

When he was sixteen years old, he married his cousin, Yasodharâ, by showing his great skill in archery (For details, see 5.3.1.).

At the age of twenty-nine, for the first time he saw, in turn, a decrepit old man, a sick man and a dead man, and then the serene face of a recluse, during several occasions of his driving (Figure 2.3.). Here, the old, the sick and the dead man symbolises the three primary suffering (*duhkha*) of human life: withering, illness, and death. This series of miserable experiences subsequently changed his life. He became disenchanted with the life of sensual pleasure he had been leading. Finally, he decided to leave the pleasure-palace and resolved to spend his days as a religious mendicant devoted to finding a solution to the problem of human suffering. At his departure from the palace, known as the Great Departure (*Mahâbhinishkramana*), he shaved his head and discarded his royal vestments in favour of the simple robe of a recluse, sacrifices which have subsequently acquired great religious significance for Buddhists.¹⁷ At the age of thirty five, after years of religious striving, Sâkyamuni finally attained the Enlightenment.¹⁸

After Sâkyamuni attained his Enlightenment, he went out preaching his message, or the Dharma, to all sentient beings whose life were suffering from decay, decease and death. In his missionary journey, he travelled from one place to another years after years without staying at fixed abode (*âvâsa*), except during the rainy seasons.

¹⁷ According to the Buddhist legend, taken subsequently by the god Sakra, the hair Sâkyamuni cut off was worshipped in the Trâyastimsa heaven (Mitra 1971: 2, n. 3).

¹⁸ For the details of the Buddha legend regarding to the attainment of the Enlightenment, see 4.3.1.

In the course of preaching, the Buddha inevitably encountered a series of severe challenges from other sects of the era over his Dharma.¹⁹ To convince people of what he believed, he demonstrated his miraculous powers at Srāvasti in the presence of these rival leaders of other sects, King Prasenajit, and a huge congregation (For details of the miracles, see 5.5.). From then on, people from all walks of life flocked to embrace his faith, including both high-caste Brahmins and ordinary people. The Buddhist community (Sangha) grew rapidly in size. By this time, not only the Buddha himself but also his Sangha could preach his Dharma. Disciples of the Buddha were sent out preaching in different directions. In this way, the spread of Buddhism was gradually expanded throughout India and its neighbouring countries. Table 2.1. summarises the crucial events in the development of Buddhism from the birth of Buddhism in 563 B.C. to the rise of the Tantric Schools in A.D. 7th century.

The general nature of the spiritual life of the Buddha can be summarised into four principal stages and is illustrated by a single sculpture, as shown in Figure 2.4.: his birth into the world for saving sentient beings from suffering, his triumph in attaining the Enlightenment by showing his right hand touching the ground, his first preaching the Dharma, and his entering the final *nirvâna* (*parinirvâna*). As to the Dharma he preached, amidst many contending beliefs of the epoch, it was important for the Buddha to distinguish his own conceptual system. However, this Buddhism was essentially more of a schism from its origin -- Hinduism -- than a new religion; and indeed, many basic Buddhist concepts are either identical to those of the original Brahmanism, or developments of Brahmanical ideas, the concepts of which I shall discuss in the next section.

¹⁹ He was challenged, for example, by "the leaders of the six most prominent sects of the epoch, namely, Pûrana Kâsyapa, Maskari Gosâliputra of the Ājivika sect, Ajitakesakambala, Kakuda Kâtyâyana, Nirgrantha Jnâtiputra of the Jaina sect, and Sanjayî Vairatiputra" (Mitra 1971: 5).

- 563 to - 483	Life of the founder of the religion, Gautama Siddhārtha, ¹ prince of a small country in northern India, Kapilavasthu. (But some authorities place it a century later.)
- 483	First Council at Rājagaha.
- 338	Second Council at Vesālī.
- 321	Maurya Empire founded by Candragupta (cf. the unification of China by Chhin Shih Huang Ti some ninety years later).
- 269 to - 237	Reign of Aśoka (Wu-Yu Wang ²). This is the earliest time from which any epigraphic evidence bearing on Buddhism exists.
- 247	Third Council at Pāṭaliputra.
- 246	Mission of Mahindra to Ceylon.
- 2nd cent.	Beginnings of Mahāyāna doctrines, continued under the Kushāna kings in the - 1st century.
+ 65	The first date at which we can place the appearance of Buddhist monks and laymen in China. They formed a community at Phêng-chhêng (modern Hsüchow in Chiangsu province) under the protection of a Han prince, Liu Ying, ³ who was also a patron of Taoism. A letter to him from the emperor mentions them (<i>Hou Han Shu</i> , ch. 72, p. 6a). See Maspero (12), p. 204, (13), p. 186, (19, 20). The work of O. Franke (5) and Maspero (5) has shown that the story of the sending out of ambassadors by the emperor Han Ming Ti (+58 to +75), as the result of a dream, and their subsequent return with books, images, and Buddhist monks in person, is nothing but a pious legend fabricated at the beginning of the +3rd century.
+ 78	Accession of Kaniška. ⁴
+ 100	Council of Sarvāstivādins under Kaniška.
+ 2nd cent.	Rise of the dialectical Mādhyamika School of Nāgārjuna. ^a
+ 148	Arrival of the Parthian Buddhist An-Chhing. ⁵ Among other missionaries of the late +2nd century Chu Shuo-Fo ⁶ the Indian, and Chih-Chhan ⁷ the Yüeh-chih, may be remembered. ^b From this time onward, a vast work of translation of texts went on.
+ 5th cent.	Rise of the idealist Yogācāra School of Vasubandhu ^a and Asaṅga. ^a
+ 6th cent.	Rise of Dignāga's School of Logic (Chhen-Na ⁸). ^c
+ 7th cent.	Śāntideva, Dharmakīrti, and the rise of the Tantric Schools.

Table 2.1. Chronology of the rise of Buddhism (Needham 1956: 398)



Figure 2.4. Life of the Buddha (Fisher 1993: 14)

2.2.2. Initial beliefs

By the time Buddhism arrived in India, the Indians were already a highly civilised people with a variety of sophisticated ideas about religion, collectively termed Hinduism, or Brahmanism. In the era of pre-Buddhist India, this religion was a dominant force, permeating every aspect of the daily lives and thoughts of each of the residents of that ancient Indian society, and informing the beliefs and behaviour of that society.²⁰ With such a strong religious background, Buddhism, in course of setting up its conceptual system, inevitably either adopted or adapted from its origin (Brahmanism), although it did also struggle to establish its own line of belief. Thus, in presenting its religious beliefs in this paragraph, I shall introduce some of the initial notions of the Buddhism which derived from the Brahmanism, and explain the Buddhist modification of them.

In the Brahmanist view, salvation can be achieved by performing the right rituals, which were stipulated in both the earlier *Vedas* (ca. 1500-800 B.C.) and the later *Upanisads* (ca. 800-600 B.C.) -- the sacred scriptures of the Hindus. In the stipulation of the *Vedas*, the ritual ceremonies were carried out physically by rites; whereas, in *Upanisads*, the rituals were implemented mentally by lengthy meditation. Both are performed to achieve the final salvation: a unity of the impersonal Brahma (the creator-god, or the Centre), and the atman (the inner essence of personal beings).

In the connotation of the Brahmanists, the prototype of the rituals mentioned above is the fire sacrifice (*karma* in Sanskrit, literally means deed or act), which people in that ancient society had to perform in their everyday actions. According to

²⁰ Basically, the Brahmanist society was stratified into hereditary status groups, the highest of which was the Brahmins. In Brahmanist terminology, these Brahmins represent the Brahmanist gods in heaven. As Bechert and Gombrich (1984: 11) points out, "[They] were 'gods on earth'." They, by the Brahmanist law, have the right to carry out the sacrificial ceremonies not only for themselves and high-status non-Brahmins, but also for local rulers.

Brahmanism, every fire sacrifice rite has its own result. A good, or right, performance of the rite produces a good result which will lead to salvation, and vice versa. To the Indian, therefore, the symbolism of the fire sacrifice includes both the performance of the ritual and the results that arise from it. The Buddha accepted the action (*karma*) of pursuing salvation. However, his definition of *karma* was not limited to the fire sacrifice whose goal is to pursue good results, but to the action of beings in which the result of the action is as important as the motive behind the deed. In other words, a good result depends solely on the motive of beings: if a "good" intention was present, then good results will be produced even if the action itself was not perfectly performed. As Needham (1956: 399) points out,

"... the happiness or misery [in successive rebirths] was regarded as being based only on moral or ethical grounds, and not on whether ritual or sacrificial acts had been performed."

In this view, the deeds became concepts purely of ethics.

According to the Brahmanist cosmology, the Brahma (the universal Principle) sacrificed himself to create and sustain the cosmos -- the original sacrificer. By following this principle, all subsequent sacrifices performed by human sacrificers are regarded as duplicating this process of the cosmogenesis. Here, the replication drew a religious equivalence between the parts of the human sacrificer (microcosm) and the parts of the cosmos (macrocosm). That is to say, the ritual performed microcosmically by the human sacrificer is equivalent to the cosmogenesis carried out macrocosmically by the creator-god, the Brahma. In this sense, the essence of success in the sacrifice depends not so much on the right ritual action as on the full appreciation of this macro-microcosmic significance.

As far as the soul of beings is concerned, the principle of equivalence between microcosm and macrocosm also resides in the correspondence between the individual soul and the soul of the universe: both possess the same nature. In this view, the

primal universal soul of the original sacrificer is the same as the eternal essence of the man which resides in his innermost heart. In Buddhism, the Buddha accepted this Brahmanical concept of microcosm and macrocosm. However, in correspondence to the Buddhist acknowledgement of no omnipotent creator-god (cf. 2.4.2.), the Buddha adapted the idea by asserting that there is an emptiness (*sûnyata*), or "no soul" (*nairâtmya*), in the innermost human heart (For further discussions, see 2.4.1.).

As to the salvation of beings mentioned above, it depends on the correct performance of the ritual sacrifices so as to free the soul from the cycle of existence. According to the Brahmanist belief, the soul of beings proceeds after death on through the cycle of existence and rebirth in another level of existence. The final destination of a being's rebirth depends on the deeds (*karma*) he has accumulated during his previous life. Here, the cycle of existence functions as the Law of Brahmanism governing the life of all beings. Within the cycle, the death and the rebirth of being is regarded as a ceaseless cosmic action. For the Brahman, salvation thus resides in the escaping from this endless cycle of existence and having an eternal life in heaven.

As for the Buddha, he adopted the idea of integrating the death and rebirth of beings with the notion of the endless cycle of existence. However, he adapted the idea by expanding the arena of the cycle of existence from the two dimensional earth to the three dimensional universe. According to Buddhist cosmology, apart from the earth (the world we live in), the universe also possess many other levels of existences above (i.e. heavens) and below (i.e. hells) the earth.²¹ In other words, the destination of rebirth could be any one of these levels of existence.

²¹ In Buddhism, there are six states of existence: those of heavenly deities, men, *asuras*, beasts, hungry ghosts, and hell. The first two are considered to be good states; the *asuras* are half good, half bad; the last three, evil (see Reichelt 1934: 67-75 and Ch'en 1964: 5; cf. 2.4.2.).

In the Buddhist view, as long as we are going through this endless cycle of existence (for details, see 8.2.), we are continually subject to suffering and misery. In religious sense, the endless cycle of existence is a synonym of the suffering and misery. In other words, to free from the suffering is to escape from the cycle of existence. As the Buddha preached in his First Sermon:²²

"Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, separation from the beloved ones is suffering, not getting what one wishes is suffering. If we wish to get rid of suffering, we must get outside the round of existence." (Ch'en Kenneth K.S. 1964: 5)

But in what way may beings escape from the suffering of perpetual rebirth (*samsâra*) ? In Buddhist belief, it can be achieved through understanding the essential Truth. As Richard Gombrich puts it,

"... the only escape from *samsâra* lay in a gnosis to be achieved by understanding an essential Truth." (Bechert, Heinz and Richard Gombrich ed. 1984: 12)

In Buddhist terminology, what is here referred to as the "essential Truth" is in fact the Dharma, the Buddhist Law which governs the life of all beings in the universe. When a being follows the principle of the Dharma, he breaks loose from the constraint of the cycle of existence and attains salvation. The word Dharma was thus used to describe the Buddha's mission to save all sentient beings.

Finally, as to the religious life that the devotee followed in pursuing salvation, there were two extreme ways of living for the devotee in the era of pre-Buddhist India: firstly, the village-centred life, which attaches the devotee to the sense of pleasure, and secondly, the wandering life which attaches the devotee to severe self-mortification. The former is conducted chiefly by the village householder, the latter, by the extreme asceticism of religious wanderers. For the Buddha, in conducting his religious life for

²² After the Buddha attained Enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree in modern Bodh-Gaya, he went to Rishipatana to deliver his First Sermon (*dharma-chakrapravartana*, "setting the Wheel of the Law in motion") (see Mitra 1971: 3).

salvation, he renounced both extreme ways of life. In his First Sermon he warned his followers to:

"Avoid these two extremes: attachment to the pleasures of the senses, which is low and vulgar, and attachment to self-mortification, which is painful; both are unprofitable." (Bechert and Gombrich ed. 1984: 12)

Because he regulated his religious life between these extremes, the life he led is called the Middle Way.

In summary, in Brahmanism, the salvation of beings lies in the unity of the universal Principle and the inner essence of beings, which can be achieved by performing the rituals, of which the fire sacrifice is the archetype. On each occasion a ritual is performed, it produces a result, or fruit. Moreover, in the world-view of the Brahmanists, it is generally believed that there is an after-life after the death of beings. It is in accordance with the accumulation of fruits that the destination of the next birth of beings will be decided.

In establishing the conceptual system of Buddhism, the Buddha adopted the notion that deeds (*karma*) in this life determine one's incarnation in the next, but adapted it by emphasising the observance of a strictly moral life. That is to say, as long as the "intention" behind the ritual performance is ethical, the good result will be produced, regardless whether the sacrifice is properly offered or the ritual is correctly performed. In this way, salvation is open to anyone who has moral virtue in conducting his life.

Moreover, in terms of Brahmanist cosmology, the performance of ritual is regarded as replicating the process of cosmogenesis. That is to say, there is a macro-microcosmic equivalence operated between the sacrificer and the original sacrificer (the creator-god). In this connection, the soul of the human sacrificer, or the inner essence of a human being, is equivalent to the Principal of the universe, or the soul of the

original sacrificer. In Buddhism, the Buddha adopted the notion of macro-microcosmic significance between man and the universe, but adapted the cosmology by acknowledging the doctrine of emptiness (*sûnyata*) in both creator-god and the inner essence of beings.

As to the belief of the after-life of beings, the Brahmanists believe that there is a cycle of existence within which a being alternates between deaths and rebirths. The accumulation of the deeds of a being in his previous life, as mentioned above, will decide his form of incarnation in his next life on earth. The only escape route from the cycle is to accumulate enough good deeds, so as to attain salvation: an eternal life in heaven. The Buddha adopted the idea of cyclic existence, but adapted it so that, apart from on earth, rebirth could occur in any level of existence above the earth (heavens), or below (hells). In other words, the Buddha redefined the cosmology from two- to three- dimensional. As to the doctrine of salvation, in its Buddhist connotation, life in the revolving cycle of existences is a process of suffering. Salvation lies in following the principle of Dharma, the Law governing the universe.

Finally, it was the religious life which led the devotee towards the attainment of salvation. The Buddha renounced both social village life which led the devotee to the sense of pleasure, and the wandering life which led to painful self-mortification. In Buddhists' view, both are unprofitable, only the middle course of religious life -- the Middle Way -- will achieve the best religious results.

2.2.3. Ideologies of Arhathood, Bodhisattvahood, and Buddhahood

-- expounded in terms of Hinayâna and Mahâyâna Buddhism

Basically, the saintship (*srâvaka*) of Buddhism can be categorised into three levels: the Arhathood, the Bodhisattvahood, and the Buddhahood. In terms of Buddhist dogma, the first two classifications of Buddhist deities -- the Arhat and the Bodhisattva -- represents respectively the ideal of the Buddhist Brotherhood (Sangha) in the two principal phases of Buddhism: the early Hinayâna and the later Mahâyâna. Moreover, the third one -- the Buddha -- which is the highest degree of saintship in both phases of Buddhism also receives a different definition in each of the two. In this section, I shall discuss in turn the nature of the three saintships in terms of Hinayâna and Mayâyâna Buddhism.

Hinayâna is also termed Theravâda (literally "Doctrine of the Elders"). This teaching focuses on the monastic discipline developed from the 5th to the 1st century B.C.²³ According to its doctrine, the devotee of Hinayâna Buddhism has to steer his religious life by strict monastic discipline -- "[puting] an end to his cravings and [holding] himself aloof from society to lead the religious life by himself for himself" (Ch'en 1964: 12). After years of religious strivings in his monastic life, the devotee attains salvation, and becomes an Arhat, the lowest degree of saintship. According to this view, the Hinayâna salvation can be achieved only by two conditions: first, the devotee who pursues salvation has to be one of the members of the Sangha, i.e. join the monastic life; and secondly, the deeds which are accumulated by the devotee during years of religious strivings towards salvation cannot be received from or

²³ However, according to its source -- the Pali canon of Buddhism -- it is believed that Hinayâna defined the monastic life at the time when it was written. Because our lack of doctrines bridging the gap between the death of the Buddha (ca. 5th century B.C.) and Hinayâna (ca. 1st century B.C.), it remains controversial whether it still preserves the original idea of the monastic life or not (Ch'en 1964: 11).

transferred to other devotees, i.e. the devotee has to accumulate deeds by himself and for himself.

To sum up, for the Hinayâna Buddhists, salvation is available only within the Sangha, or the Buddhist community; and meritorious deeds (*karma*) are accumulated only by the individual and for the individual. In this way, the platform of salvation is so narrowly defined that Hinayâna Buddhism is also known as the "Lesser Vehicle" (小乘) -- the Vehicle only for the Lesser minority. The characteristics of the Hînayâna School, as Ernest John Eitel (1970: 64) defines them,

"are the preponderance of active moral asceticism and the absence of metaphysical speculation and mysticism."

As to Mahâyâna Buddhism, its doctrine, which flourished later especially in China, was developed in the 2nd century A.D. by Nâgârdjuna. In defining salvation, it took a broader view than Hinayâna's. Mahâyâna teaches that salvation is offered to all sentient beings rather than a few devotees within the monastic order. Moreover, the deeds needed for salvation can be conferred by the enlightened one upon others. Because of these characteristics, Mahâyâna is also termed the Great Vehicle (大乘) -- the Vehicle for the Great majority.

In order to elucidate its view that salvation is open to all sentient beings, Mahâyâna advocated the doctrine of the Buddha Nature, which Nature is regarded as the essence of all beings residing in their innermost heart. Possession of this essential Nature enables all beings to be potential enlightened ones. Moreover, salvation is attained primarily by offering the faith and devotion of the devotee to the Buddha rather than by strictly following any ascetic monastic discipline.

In Mahâyâna Buddhism, saintship which can fulfill this Mahâyâna virtue of sharing the rewards of merits and saving all beings is that of the Bodhisattva, the second degree of saintship. Although this saint in his spiritual journey has met the requirements for being a Buddha, he chooses to remain as a Bodhisattva, which enables him to stay in the world and transfer the deeds he has accumulated to sentient beings, until they too all attain enlightenment. In order to fulfill his mission, the Bodhisattva has to present himself or incarnate himself into other forms in every level of existence, even the most notorious hell, to save unfortunate beings from misery (For details of the Mahâyâna Bodhisattva, see 8.4.). Eitel (1970: 90) summarises the characteristics of the system of Mahâyâna, compared with that of Hinayâna Buddhism, as,

"an excess of transcendental speculation tending to abstract nihilism, and the substitution of fanciful degrees of meditation in place of the practical asceticism of the Hinâyâna School."

From the monastic point of view, Hinayâna Buddhism regarded the Buddha as a human devotee who attained salvation by following austere monastic discipline and preached the Dharma to save all sentient beings. To the Mahâyâna Buddhists, the Buddha is considered as an eternal being who has a triple body, namely, the body of essence (*dharmakâya*), the body of communal enjoyment (*sambhogakâya*), and the body of transformation (*nirmânakâya*). According to the doctrine of the triple body of the Buddha, he can incarnate himself to any of these bodies in order to fulfill his mission.

The first body is the essence of the Buddha which signifies the unity of all Buddhas in the past, present and future (Ch'en 1964: 14). That is to say, all Buddhas possess the same essence. Moreover, the nature of the essence (*fo-hsiang* 法 相) is also regarded as a state of Deliverance. As revealed in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (a Pali canon),

"The Perfect One is free from any theory, for the Perfect One has understood what the body is, and how it arises, and passes away. He has understood what feeling is, and how it arises, and passes away. He has understood what perception is, and how it arises, and passes away. He has understood what mental formations is, and how it arises, and passes away. And he has understood what consciousness is, and how it arises, and passes away. Therefore I say, the Perfect One has won complete deliverance through the extinction, fading away, disappearance, rejection and getting rid of all opinions and conjectures, and of all inclination to the vainglory of I and mine." (Wu John C.H. 1974: 222)²⁴

The second body (the body of communal enjoyment) is incarnated by the Buddha to fulfil the mission of the Bodhisattva -- staying in the world to save all sentient beings. In manifestation, the body normally emerges with a symphony of light and sound -- "with light emanating from every pore, illuminating the entire universe, and a voice preaching the Mahâyâna Sûtra to multitudes of people" (Ch'en 1964: 14). Here, the manifestation of the body fulfils the characteristic of the body -- communal enjoyment. As to the third body (the body of transformation), it is regarded as the incarnation of the Buddha on earth. In manifestation, the body of the Buddha is transformed into human form. The founder of Buddhism -- the earthly Sâkyamuni -- is believed to be the human incarnated by the eternal Buddha in order to carry out his mission to save all beings.

In summary, the Hinayâna Buddhists, in their pursuit of salvation, focus on the strict religious cultivation of individuals during monastic life. All the deeds accumulated towards salvation cannot be transferred to others. The Arhathood, the saintship which can fully reflect this characteristic, represents the final destination of their spiritual journey. For the Mahâyâna Buddhists, all beings are regarded as the potential enlightened, because of the Buddha Nature which is embedded in the

²⁴ In the text, what the Perfect One has understood, the body, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness, are in fact the Five Aggregates of the human being that I shall discuss in detail later, in 2.4.1.

innermost heart of beings. Thus, salvation is attainable for all sentient beings rather than the few who join the monastic order (Needham 1956: 399). In this school, salvation is more broadly defined. In terms of saintship, the Bodhisattva is the ideal deity of the Mahâyâna devotee, his aim being to fulfill the mission of passion -- saving all sentient beings from suffering.

As to Buddhahood, the most advanced state of saintship of both Hinayâna and Mahâyâna Buddhism, it is defined diversely in accordance with the differing missions of both schools of Buddhism. The Hinayâna Buddhists regarded the Buddha as a human teacher who led his life in a monastic order, accumulating deeds to attain salvation, and carried out his mission of saving beings in misery.

However, the Mahâyâna Buddhists considered the Buddha as an eternal being who has a triple body -- the bodies of the essence, communal enjoyment, and the transformation. Of these three bodies, the body of essence represents the nature of all Buddhas. The body of communal enjoyment displays the power of the Buddha which is usually employed by the Bodhisattva to appear in all levels of existence in order to save the beings. As to the body of transformation, the human form such as that of the earthly Sâkyamuni is one prominent example. In manifestation, these body forms can be exchanged at the will of the Buddha to fulfil his mission. In short, in Mahâyâna Buddhism, the Buddha was more broadly defined and given more power for carrying out his mission.

2.3. TRADITIONAL CHINESE BELIEFS

The general body of traditional Chinese religious beliefs arose from the successful establishment of the cosmology in pre-Buddhist China. This cosmology established the cosmic framework of the trinity, that is, Heaven, Earth, and Man. Subsequent beliefs, such as Confucianism and Taoism, all tried to rectify the relationship between these three -- to figure out a way of harmonising the relationship between Heaven, Earth, and Man. In this section, I shall discuss the trinity first in terms of its divinities and corresponding temple architecture, and then explore the way how the other beliefs deal with the relationships between the members of the trinity.

2.3.1. The traditional Chinese trinity (Heaven, Earth, and Man)

-- its divinities and corresponding temple architecture

In the concepts of the Chinese people, Heaven, Earth, and Man are the three fundamental components of the universe. Heaven is regarded as the supreme guideline for people's conduct. That is to say, every action should be justifiable in terms of the will of Heaven. This justification enables people to orient themselves and to achieve a foothold in the cosmos. This viewpoint is witnessed in the traditional Chinese building environment. As Fu Chao-ching 傅朝卿 (1990: 85) points out,

"In order to establish a link between [themselves] and [the Heaven], people in the past erected temples and endowed many buildings with cosmological meanings which come to form the sacred part of the settlement."

As to Earth, it is considered as a manifestation of Heaven. In terms of the physical environment of Earth, Chinese people traditionally have always felt that the natural state of Earth -- its flora and fauna as well as its topography -- should be kept

in harmony with Heaven, in order to maintain a good relationship between them. A famine on Earth is seen as a result of disharmony with Heaven. Concerning Man, or the human being, who is believed to be the product of the union of Heaven and Earth, people are aware of the importance of the relationship between themselves and Heaven. Chinese history yields countless examples in which the collapse of a regime, or a family, has been explained as Heaven's punishment (Ibid.: 92, 242).

In sum, Heaven, Earth and Man are here viewed as an indissoluble trinity. As Tung Chung-shu (董仲舒), philosopher of the Han (漢) dynasty, puts it,

"Heaven, earth and man are the root of all things. Heaven begets them, earth nourishes them and man completes them... These three complement each other as arms and legs go together to make a complete body; no one of them can be dispensed with."²⁵

Moreover, for the universe as a whole, in which Heaven, Earth, and Man are fundamental components, this theory indicates both spatial and temporal dimensions. The spatial and temporal significance is reflected in the Chinese etymology of the word "universe" -- *yü-chou* (宇宙):

"*Yü* (宇) means the space defined by six directions: the above, the below and the four cardinal points; *chou* (宙) means from the bygone to the coming, i.e. temporal continuity." (Chiou Bor-shuenn 邱伯舜 1991: 185-6)

Here, the components of this term -- *yü* (宇) and *chou* (宙) -- reflect the way the Chinese have traditionally conceived of their universe.

Parallel to the trinity, there were in pre-Buddhist China three corresponding groups of divinities -- the Heavenly deity, the Earthly deity, and the spirits of the ancestors.²⁶ The Shang (商) dynasty (trad. 1766-1122 B.C.) deities to whom

²⁵ *Ch'en-ch'iu fa-lun* (千秋法輪) (19) (Arthur F. Wright 1959: 12).

²⁶ Due to the lack of direct textual evidence, religious building before the Yin-shang (ca. 1500-1027 B.C.) is extremely difficult to ascertain (see Ho 1992: 23). Here we shall confine ourselves to the

sacrifices were offered were: first, the Heavenly deity (*tien-shen* 天神), known as *shang-ti* (上帝, or "God on High"); secondly, the Earthly deity (*ti-shih* 地示), known as *t'u* (土), meaning the Soil, or God of the Soil; and thirdly, the Spirits of the Dead (*jen-kui* 人鬼) which included those of ancestral kings, lords, and consorts (*p'i* 嬖) (Chen Meng-chia 陳夢家 1956: 562; Kiyoshi Akatsuka 1977: 530-2; and Ho Puay-peng 何培彬 1992: 24). These spirits were recorded in inscriptions on bone-oracles of the Shang dynasty and in *Chou-li*. (周禮). In the course of time, and from one dynasty to the next, the status and interpretation of these deities in the minds of the people may have been subject to variation, but basically, these three levels of divinities remained.²⁷

The relevance of these classifications to temple architecture is that each of the three developed its own structures, suited to the performance of the proper rituals. Although the exact correlation between the names given them, and the types of architecture involved, is unclear,²⁸ there is a passage in *Chou-li* (41. 24b-27a) which casts some light on this correspondence:

"The *chiang-jen* (匠人) constructs the state capitals. He makes a square nine *li* (里) on each side; each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine north-south and nine east-west streets. On the left [as one faces south] is the *chu* 祖 [the ancestral temple], and to the right is the *she* (社) [altar of soil]. [In the centre located] the *shih-shih* (世室) of the tribe of Hsia (夏), ... the four-eaved *ch'ung-wu* (重屋) of Yin (殷) people, ... the *ming-t'ang* (明堂) of the people of Chou (周) ..." (Ho 1992: 29)

According to this passage, the architect placed the palace compound (*shih-shih*, *ch'ung-wu*, or *ming-t'ang*) in the centre of the capital where the emperor (the "Son of

period after the Yin-shang, i.e. the late Shang, the Chou, the Ch'in (秦), the Western Han and the early Eastern Han periods (ca. 1027 B.C. - A.D. 68).

²⁷ For example, the Heavenly deity, *shang-ti*, seemed to be gradually replaced by *tien*, the god that, as analysed by Hsu and Linduff (1988: 106) was seen by the people of the Chou as the supreme moral authority. As to the worship of the Earthly deity and the ancestor, there were some transformations as well. The people of the Chou did not confine the worship of *she* to the land but also included the grains that are produced by it and did not give the status of gods to ancestral spirits as the Shang did (Ho 1992: 27-8).

²⁸ Owing to widely different interpretations of the names proposed by ancient and modern scholars alike, it is impossible to know if they corresponded neatly to the three classes of divinities worshipped at the time (Ho 1992: 30).

Heaven", or 天子) ruled the state; to the left (*chu*) and right (*she*) of it were buildings which were dedicated to the spirits of the dead and the Earthly deity respectively, as shown in Figure 2.5. In order to give a deeper understanding of the relationship between the divinities and the temples, I shall discuss each of the three categories and their respective buildings in turn.

Of all these divinities, the Heavenly deity is the principal one. To the people of the Shang, *shang-ti*, who was located in Heaven, was regarded as the almighty god who legitimised the affairs of state on Earth (Ho 1992: 24 and Chen 1956: 561-72). For example, King T'ang (湯 王) of the Shang justified the conquest of the Hsia people by claiming it was the will of *shang-ti*. Likewise, to the Chou people, their conquest of the Shang was seen by them as representing a change in the "Mandate of Heaven" (*t'ien-ming* 天命).²⁹ Although there is still some argument as to specific differences, the shared understanding of the Supreme Being amongst the Chinese at this time was that he had a central and transcendent position in the cosmos and in the ethical life of society.

As far as temple-architecture is concerned, records mention "the *shih-shih* of the tribe of Hsia, ... the four-eaved *ch'ung-wu* of Yin people" and "... the *ming-t'ang* of the people of Chou,..", and we can assume that although the names are different, each referred to a similar building constructed by the different dynasties for the performance of rituals in honour of the Supreme Being. Due to the lack of historical literature on the subject, the function and form of the *shih-shih* and *ch'ung-wu* are very difficult to trace. On the other hand, *ming-t'ang*, as mentioned in the records of both *Chou-li* and *Li-chi* (禮記),³⁰ was seen as the concrete expression of

²⁹ According to Chen's (1956: 580-2) observation, *tien* is a concept of the Chou: it is a name not used by the Shang at all, as neither was the term *tien-ming*.

³⁰ According to *Chou-li*, this type of building is said to have existed since the legendary Hsia dynasty; and in the *Li-chi*, there is a passage, "Ming-t'ang-wei", which reveals the idea of the *ming-*



⊥ N

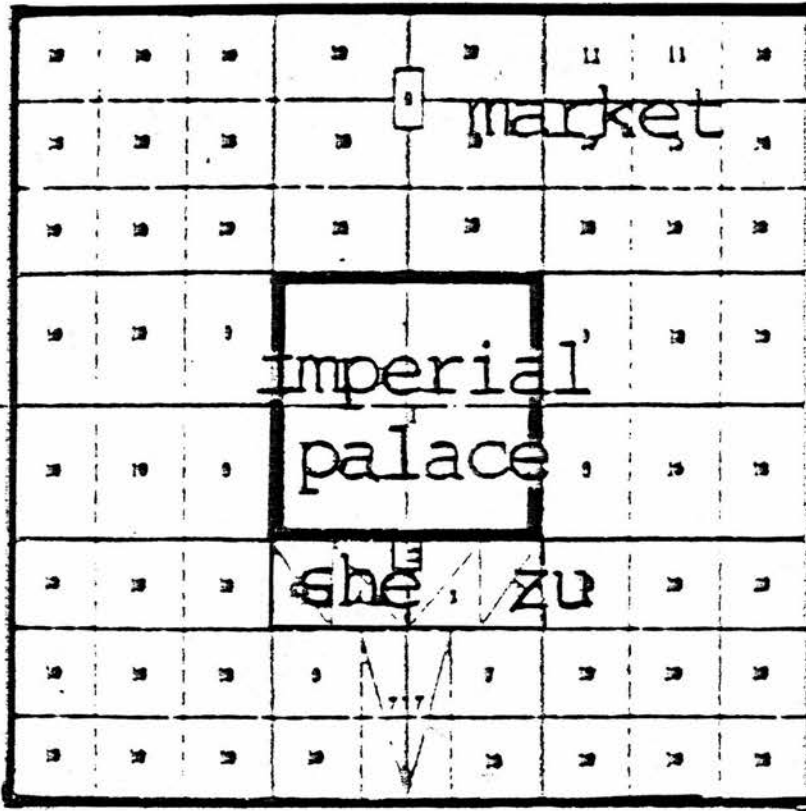


Figure 2.5. Diagram of the palace compound (Ho 1992: 33)

the legitimacy of the king's rule and as the symbolic centre of the political power of the state. For example, as indicated in the "Ming-t'ang Wei" (明堂位) of *Li-chi*, the *ming-t'ang* is the place where the Duke of Chou conducted the affairs of the state.

During the Han era, the symbolism of the *ming-t'ang* is likely to have been further formalised, as shown in Figure 2.6. Revealed in this layout, the circle, which surrounded the central building and the compound, symbolises Heaven, and the square building compound itself represents Earth. The plan bears witness to the way the Chinese conceived of their universe -- *t'ien-yüan ti-fang* ("Heaven Round and Earth Square", 天圓地方) (Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper 1956: 384-5).

Chang Hêng (張衡) (A.D. 78-139), in his "Fu of the Eastern Capital" unveiled the cosmological symbolism of the details of building (Figure 2.7.), as follows:

"A two-storeyed fane with double eaves, having eight apertures and nine chambers; compass-drawn like the Heavens and squared-off like the Earth; telling of the seasons and conforming to the cardinal directions." (Sickman 1956: 385)

In this passage, the cosmological symbolism has merged into the inner structure of the building in numerical terms, as follows.

"The eight windows stood for the eight winds, and there were four other apertures, one for each season; the nine apartments reflected the divisions of the empire; the twelve halls or thrones the months of the year; thirty-six other doors represented the number of ten-day periods in the year, and seventy two other windows corresponded to the number of five-day periods." (Sickman 1956: 385)

On the whole, the *ming-t'ang* was an embodiment of the "Heavenly Way", (*tien-tao* 天道) -- the way Heaven and Earth were envisaged at the time.

As inscribed in the Shang oracle bones, the deity of Earth is named *t'u* (土, literally meaning "Soil"). The worship of *t'u*, was originally carried out in the hope of

t'ang and suggests that the concept of *ming-t'ang* originated towards the end of the Warring States period (480-222 B.C.), or even during the early years of the Western Han dynasty.

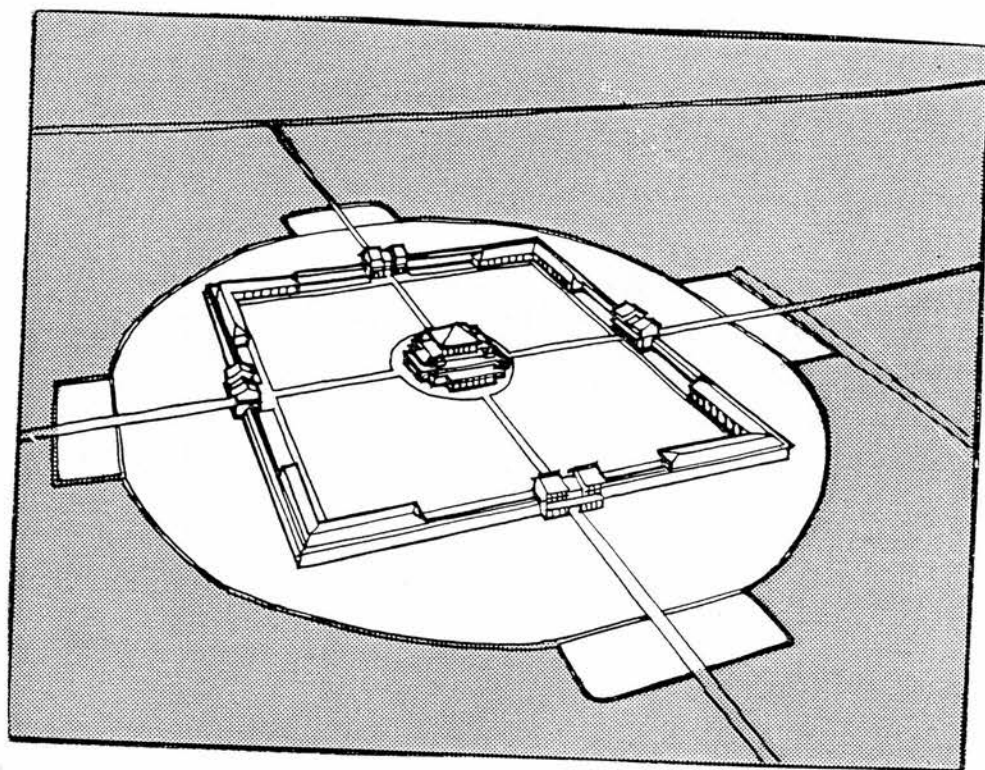


Figure 2.6. Han *Ming-t'ang* (Liu 1989: 43)

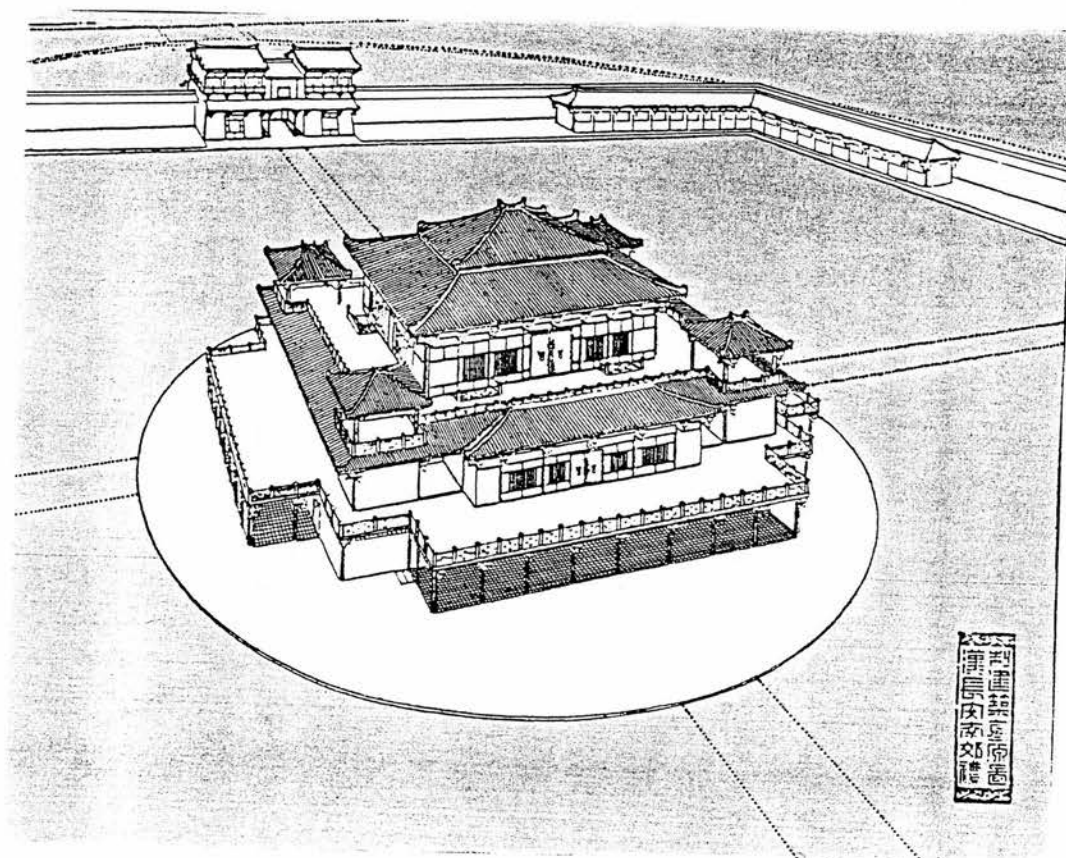


Figure 2.7. Central building of *Ming-t'ang* (Li 1986: 73)

securing good harvests from the soil. (Akatsuka 1977: 180). As well as being a divine power that was called upon, it can be seen from the use of the character in inscriptions that *t'u* could also be employed to describe the act of worship carried out at the altar in honour of a particular ancestor and to give thanks (Hsu Cho-yun and Katheryn M. Linduff 1988: 582-4). In course of time, the worship of the Earthly deity underwent a transformation -- people began to worship him not only for the sake of the land that the crops were grown on, but concerning the seeds themselves (Chen 1956: 583).

As to temples built for offering sacrifices to the Earth deity, there were basically two archetypes of altar (*she* in Chinese): one for family use, the other for public rituals. The term '*she*' as the domestic altar can be found in many different contexts, and was constructed from a variety of materials, as can be seen from the excerpt from *Huai-nan-tzu* (淮南子):

"In the sacrificial rite of the tribe of You-yü (有虞), *she* was made of earth for the worship held at the *chung-liu* (中囿); the tribe of Hsia-hou (夏侯) used pine in their *she* for the worship held at the *hu* (戶, or single leaf door); in the rite of the people of Yin, the *she* was made of stone for the worship held at the *men* (門, or double leaf door); and in the rite of the people of Chou, the *she* was made of chestnut tree for the worship held at the *tsao* (灶, or the hearth)." (*Huai-nan-tzu* 11. 176; Ho 1992: 30-1)

At the state level, the worship of the Earth deity was solely held in a building, an enclosed space.³¹ In rituals, the head of a family would preside over the sacrifices on a domestic level (*Li-chi* : 25. 20b), and thus, these sacrifices became fundamental to the identity of the family. At the state level, the public sacrifices had a similar symbolic significance (Wang Meng-ou 王夢鷗 1969: 340).

³¹ As Ling Ch'un-sheng (凌純聲) (1964: 30) points out, sacrifices at state level were originally offered in both the open space and the temple building. The reason for worshipping solely inside the building was that at first the open air sacrifices, like the domestic *chung-liu* noted above, were for all gods. In course of time, as the population of gods increased, more and more sites were needed for offering sacrifices. The *she* temple was then reserved for worship of the god of Earth.

So far as spatial organisation is concerned, according to *Chou-li* (19. 1a; 41. 25a) the *she* temple was located to the right of the imperial palace when facing south (cf. Figure 2.5.). To the left of the palace, in mirror image, was the ancestral temple which placed *she* in a dualistic relationship with the ancestral temple. Obviously, this symmetrical arrangement of temples increased the imposing nature of the central palace and played an important role in determining the layout of the city.

Turning to the spirits of humans, the whole idea of Chinese ancestral worship originated from an ancient belief that all human beings have an after-life. According to this belief, beings also in their after-life need to consume foods and commodities, which can be sent to them by their living progeny. Moreover, from his tomb, the deceased preserves the power to either curse or bless his progeny, depending on whether the offerings are properly offered or not (Sarah Allen 1991: 19). This belief is testified to by Chinese pottery vessels of the neolithic era, which were filled with grain and buried with the dead. Pottery as well as bronze vessels of the Shang dynasty (1750-1049 B.C.), likewise filled with food offerings, were also buried in tombs.

With the arrival of the Chou dynasty (1049-221 B.C.), the ancestral spirits began to be perceived differently.

"The services at the ancestral temples, held several times a year, were not to pay homage to awesome spirits who existed beyond the human world; rather, they were thought to be communal gatherings for both the deceased and the living." (Hsu and Linduff 1988: 376)

That is, sacrifices continued to be offered to them but these deceased members were seen as part of the living family.

The building type in which the worship of the ancestral spirits took place, was called a *tsung-miao* (宗廟). In etymological terms, *tsung* (宗) refers to all ancestors, and *miao* (廟), to the building in which ancestral tablets are kept (Chen 1956: 468,

479). The term *tsung-miao* as a whole refers to the ancestral temple. The ancestral temple, together with the temple of Earth, are believed to have been built at the beginning of the construction of a new city. As revealed in *Li-chi* (46. 7b-8b),

"When a lord is sent to rule a part of the kingdom during the Western Chou, it is said that he has to set up an ancestral temple and an altar as soon as he arrived in the city." (Ho 1992: 35)

The passage above indicates that the ancestral and Earth god temples were the most important buildings within the city precinct.

In architectural terms, the ancestral temple is commonly described as a group of buildings rather than a single structure (Akatsuka 1977: 749-53). The compound, according to *Shih-ching* (詩經) (16. 2. 18b-22a), was generally regarded as being enclosed by a tall wall made from compacted earth. Gates in this wall -- *miao-men* (廟門) -- opened into the compound, which would contain a central primary building and several subsidiary buildings. Here, the quantity of buildings built in a compound, as indicated in *Li-chi* (46. 7b-11b), has to match the status of the deceased: according to the Chou regulations, only the ancestral temple of the emperor could have seven subsidiary buildings in the complex, while others were only allowed a lesser number of buildings.

To sum up, the trinity (Heaven, Earth, and Man) was regarded as the indissoluble fundamental components of the universe -- Heaven, the supreme principle directly informs the condition of Earth and supervises every action of people on Earth; in turn, Earth manifests Heaven and Man's behaviours should reflect and be justified by the principles of Heaven.

Concerning the divinities, there were three classifications of deity representing each of the triad, namely, the Heavenly deity *shang-ti* (上帝, or "God on High"), the Earthly deity *t'u* (土, or "Soil"), and the Human Spirits *jen-kui* (人鬼, or "Spirits of

the Dead"). In addition, in terms of temple architecture, there were also three categories of building type built for the performance of the ritual, that is, the temple of Heaven (*shih-shih* 世室, *ch'ung-wu* 重屋, or *ming-t'ang* 明堂), the temple of Earth *she* (社, or "Altar of Soil"), the temple of Man *tsu* (祖, or the ancestral temple). Functionally speaking, of the three deities, *shang-ti* governed all heavenly gods, and authorised the conduct of the earthly emperors; *t'u* secured rich harvests for people on Earth; and *jen-kui* blessed his progeny with prosperity.

Of the three types of temple architecture, the temple of Heaven is the place where the emperors exercised the mandate of the Heaven, and where the proper rituals were performed in honour of Heaven; the temple of Earth with an altar inside it is the place for offering sacrifices to the Earth deity at both the domestic and state levels; the temple of Man is the place where the ancestral tablets are kept, and the place where the offspring pay their homage to their ancestors. In terms of spatial organisation, these three structures were the most important buildings in the city precinct and occupied its central area -- the temple of Heaven situated in the centre, the temples of Earth and Man to its right and left, and all facing the South.

As a whole, the trinity, in terms of its divinities and temple architecture, originated from the pre-Buddhist China. As time went on, although its concepts were adapted, they continued to be a dominant idea of Chinese cosmology throughout Chinese history. Inevitably, this has had a significant influence, for the Chinese people, in their interpreting of the foreign Buddhism.

2.3.2. Confucianism

Confucianism was founded by Confucius (Figure 2.8.) whose family name was K'ung (孔), given name, Ch'iu (丘), and cognomen Chung-ni (仲 尼). He was born in 551 B.C. in a small state, called Lu (魯), in modern Shantung province. At the time he was born, China was in a state of chaos -- the civil war between the various states was destroying the peace of the feudal society. When he grew up, he spent most of his life wandering around the states (495-482 B.C.), propagating a philosophy of harmonious social relationships to the different rulers, in order to save China from the endless wars.

He died in 479 B.C., three years after he had settled down again in his native state (Lu), where he was concentrating on composing his ideas into writing and teaching his students. Two years after he died, a temple was built by the prince of Lu on the site of his house to commemorate the great teacher. It included, most importantly, the auditorium hall (杏 壇) where he originally held his lectures to his disciples, and a principal hall (大 成 殿) where the images of Confucius and his disciples were worshipped. In course of time, memorial halls were added to the temple complex by successive dynasties. Figure 2.9. shows the updated plan of the temple of Confucius. Although his ideas of the Chinese social hierarchical system were not put into practice at that time, his influence on Chinese society as a whole was so deep and thorough that his beliefs became the main stream of traditional Chinese philosophy.

In defining the relationship between his idea of the social system and the Chinese cosmological trinity (Heaven, Earth, and Man), he urges people to:

"[believe] in heaven or a personal god who watches over the conduct of man and government; [believe] that man is the noblest creature created by the essence of heaven and earth, and is favoured by heaven; [believe] in rewards and punishment for good and evil; [believe] that there is a reciprocal relationship between heaven and conduct of man,

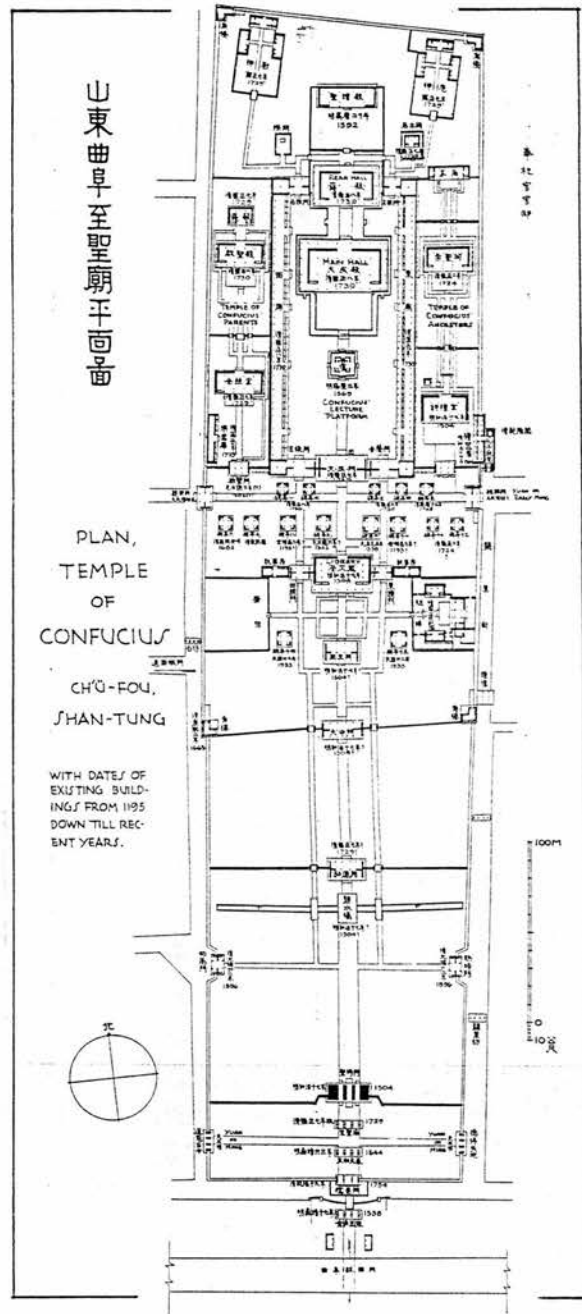


Figure 2.8. Confucius (Powell 1979: 4) -- (left)
Figure 2.9. Plan of the temple of Confucius, Shantung province (Liang 1984: 118) -- (Right)

so that good deeds bring forth propitious omens and evil deeds, warnings and penalties; [believe] in astrology as the means of predicting events and interpreting the meaning of heavenly phenomena." (Ch'en 1964: 22)

In these ideas, the Confucianists adopted the traditional idea, mentioned above, that Man is the result of the union of Heaven and Earth, and that Heaven is the supreme judge of the conduct of earthly Man. Every aspect of the behaviour of human beings must be in harmony with the moral will of Heaven. As Tung Chung-shu, a Confucian scholar, points out,

"the action of man flows into the universal course of heaven and earth and causes reciprocal reverberations in their manifestations." (Ch'en 1964: 22-3)

That is to say, earthly catastrophes, such as floods or earthquakes, are regarded as warning punishments meted out by Heaven in response to human misconduct, such as killing, torturing, stealing, etc. If human beings carry on with their ruinous conduct, regardless of these warnings, they are condemned to be destroyed.

Crucial to Confucianism was the careful integration of the ideas mentioned above into the Chinese social hierarchical system in which the three ranks of people -- the ruler, the ministers and the masses -- were regarded as an indissoluble trinity. In this system, the ruler was believed to be the Son of Heaven who, in the performance of his duties, should carry out the will of Heaven, that is, to rule over the country by demonstrating virtue and proper conduct. If he failed to fulfil this objective,

"he was said to have lost the heavenly mandate; he ceased to be the rightful ruler, and the people were justified in rising up against him and installing another in his place. No voting was involved, but it was firmly believed that heaven decided as the people decided: if a rebel leader succeeded in deposing the emperor and occupying the throne himself, it was a sign of Heaven's favour." (Ch'en 1964: 21)

After the Son of Heaven came the class of Confucian scholar-official who had the responsibility of advising the emperor on what were the accepted norms of virtue and proper conduct. These officials together with the ruler constituted the government,

which was intended to use its powers to achieve a harmonious society. That is to say, the whole country would be as orderly and stable as Heaven if the ruler and scholar-officials ruled and ministered properly. As to the masses, or the ordinary people, in this system, they were expected to correctly play the role that was appropriate to their status in their daily life, and to obey and follow the examples of their rulers and ministers. On the other hand, it was also the king's obligation to educate and civilise his people.

In sum, the Confucians set up the ethical guidelines of Chinese society. As revealed in *The Analects* ("Conversations and Discourses of Confucius", *Lun-yü* 論語) (XIII. 11),

When Duke Ching of Ch'i inquired of Confucius about government, Confucius said: "There is government, when ruler is ruler and minister is minister, father is father and son is son." (Chang Aloysius 1974: 199)

In society, the actions of the trinity (the ruler, the minister, and masses) were intimately interrelated, but as well as having social repercussions, their actions also had cosmic implications.

Functionally speaking, the aim of Confucianism was to establish a harmonious social system in order to put the chaotic feudal society back in order. So the philosophy concentrated on the welfare of society as a whole and its constituent parts, the ruler, ministers, and masses, rather than on the personal needs of the individual, such as longevity. In contrast, Taoism, the other main stream of Chinese traditional philosophy, which I shall discuss in the next section, was also established to achieve the welfare of humanity, but from the individuals' point of view. Both, as Patrick Nuttgens (1983: 67) points out, "were seeking for a principle of unity in life during a turbulent period of Chinese history".

On the whole, Confucian ideology was a successful means of maintaining order, stability and harmony in government and society. As for its architectural expression, its rationalism -- axuality, hierarchy, and symmetry -- is characterised by the angular geometry of traditional Chinese architecture. This in turn has had an influence on the hierarchy of buildings on the central longitudinal axis of the Chinese Buddhist temple which I shall discuss in 5.4.

2.3.3. Taoism

Taoism, as presented by its major scriptures -- *Lao-tzu* (老子), also known as the *Tao-te ching* (道德經, or "Canon of the Virtue of the Way"), which is dated about 300 B.C., and *Chuang-tzu* (莊子), which is dated shortly after the appearance of *Tao-te ching* -- is a philosophy of nature. Apart from these two main texts, there were two other important texts also addressing the main ideas of Taoism -- *Lieh-tzu* (列子) and *Kuan-tzu* (管子) -- for both of which the dates of writing are difficult to trace. These titles mentioned above, except for *Tao-te ching*, refer both to the texts and to their authors.³²

In the Taoists' view, there is no omnipotent creator-god.³³ The universe is operated by an invisible and omnipotent order. In Taoism, this order is called Tao (道, or "Way").³⁴ In its governing and controlling of the universe, Tao works in an unseen but dominant way. As revealed in *Chuang-tzu* (Chap. 6),

³² According to Ch'en (1956: 24), Lao-tzu was a person of a doubtful historicity. Therefore, in his view, the *Tao-te ching* may have been compiled by more than one person. Likewise, *Chuang-tzu* may not have been written entirely by Chuang-tzu, although there is no question of his not having existed.

³³ In this belief of no creator-deity, the Taoists and the Buddhists share the same view (cf. 2.2.2.).

³⁴ In contrast to the Taoist Tao which was employed to signify the order of the universe, Confucius employed the term Tao to define the ideal way of life within human society (Needham 1956: 8 & 36). That is to say, the Confucian Tao means the right way of action in social and political terms.

The Tao has reality and evidence, but no action and no form. It may be transmitted but cannot be received. It may be attained but can not be seen. It exists by and through itself. (Feng Yü-lan 1933: 117)

That is to say, in an exoteric sense, this Tao is omnipresent, though always veiled from our eyes; while in an esoteric sense, we are permeated by it and partake of its very being. It possesses both physical and metaphysical manifestations, consequently Taoist sages never presumed to define the Ultimate, as indicated in *Tao-te ching* (Chap. 1):

"He who speaks [of the Tao] does not know; he who knows does not speak."; and "The Tao expressible in words is not the eternal Tao; a name that can be spoken is not that of the eternal Tao."

In defining the relationship between the Tao and the Trinity (Heaven, Earth, and Man), the Taoists believe that:

[The Tao] existed before Heaven and Earth, and indeed for all eternity. It causes the gods to be divine and the world [Heaven, Earth, and Man] to be produced... Though prior to Heaven and Earth it is not ancient. Though older than the most ancient, it is not old. (*Chuang-tsu* Chap. 6; Feng 1933: 117)

Here, the term Tao incorporates the idea of the ultimate Source -- the Tao, as the Order of Nature. As revealed in *Tao-te ching* (Chap. 51),

... The Tao bore them, and the Virtue of the Tao reared them, made them grow, fostered them, harboured them, fermented them, nourished them, and incubated them ... (Needham 1956: 37)

"Them" here refers to the ten thousand things of the world. In sum, the Tao ("Tao" 道) brought all things in this universe into existence and the Virtue of the Tao ("Te" 德) bred them.

Though awesomely holy, the Tao does not require worship, being unaffected by praise or blame. As chapter 51 of the *Tao-te ching* continues to reveal,

... Therefore of the ten thousand things there is not one that does not worship the Tao and do homage to its Virtue. Yet the worshipping of the Tao, and the doing of homage to its Virtue, no mandate ever decreed. Always this [adoration] was free and spontaneous... Rear them, but not lay claim to them. Control them but never lean upon

them. Be chief among them, but not lord it over them. This is called the invisible Virtue. (Needham 1956: 37)

Moreover, in chapter 34 of the *Tao-te ching*,

"The myriad objects owe their existence to the Tao, but it contains no lordship; it accomplishes all, yet does not seek to possess".

In other words, belief in Tao, the eternal law of the universe, is considered spontaneously to embrace the majesty of the universe. This belief reflects the Taoist claim that there is no omnipotent creator-deity.

The ideology of Taoism was in course of time developed by the Chinese into a religion of salvation, called Tao-chiao (道教, or "Taoist Religion").³⁵ For the Taoist religion, salvation lies in the union between the devotee and material immortality. In order to achieve this union, i.e. to become an immortal, the devotee is required to practise respiratory, heliotherapeutic, gymnastic, sexual, alchemical and pharmaceutical, and dietary techniques (Needham 1956: 143). Of these six techniques, the first, respiratory, and the fifth, alchemical and pharmaceutical, techniques are most widespread.

Regarding the respiratory exercises, the Taoist believed that human beings were made from the impure breath of Earth, and animated by the pure air which was between Heaven and Earth.³⁶ The aim of the exercises was to discharge the impure air within the human body and fill it with pure air. Once this aim is achieved, the human

³⁵ The exact date of the establishment of the religion is unclear. It became popular after the legendary Chang Tao-ling (張道陵) with his followers set up an independent State practising the belief of the religion between A.D. 156 to 215 on the borders of modern Szechwan and Shansi provinces (For details of the development of the Taoist religion, see Needham 1956: 155-161).

³⁶ According to the Taoist legend (Ch'en 1964: 26), the world was created by the dispersion of nine mixed breaths which impregnated the primeval universe. In dispersion, the pure breaths ascended to form Heaven; and the impure air descended to form Earth. The dispersed operation of the breaths created gods. Subsequently, gods created human beings by making four statues of earth in four cardinal directions and exposing them to breathe the pure air for three hundred years. When the human body was filled with the pure air, these statues became alive. Therefore, the Taoists believed that the human body was made from the impure breath of Earth, and only the pure air between Heaven and Earth could animate it.

being becomes immortal -- the body "is transformed from a gross, heavy body into one that is light and subtle" (Ch'en 1964: 26).

For achieving their purpose, the Taoists introduced a breathing exercise which involved holding the pure inspired breath as long as possible, the so-called *pi-ch'i* (閉氣) (Needham 1956: 144). Moreover, in order to fully attain the effect of the pure breath, the Taoists developed a meditative technique which drove the breath around the body. The technique originated from the breathing exercise which has been found inscribed on Chou jades (ca. the 6th century B.C.), as follows.

In breathing one must proceed [as follows]. One holds [the breath] and it is collected together. If it is collected it expands. When it expands it goes down. When it goes down, it becomes quiet. When it becomes quiet it will solidify. When it become solidified it will begin to sprout. After it has sprouted it will grow. As it grows it will be pulled back again [to the upper regions]. When it has been pulled back it will reach the crown of the head. Above, it will press against the crown of the head. Below, it will press downwards. Whoever follows this will live; whoever acts contrary to it will die. (Quoted by Needham 1956: 143-4)

As to the alchemical and pharmaceutical technique, the Taoist believed that the human body consisted of constituent elements which would disperse at death. In this view, to achieve immortality entails preventing these constituent elements from dispersing. In order to prevent them from dispersing, the Taoists suggested that the human body had to be nourished by alchemical and pharmaceutical materials such as cinnabar, a mercuric sulphide. Moreover, in order to prevent the onset of decrepitude, they also advised that cereals should be abstained from. They believed that cereals were the cause of certain maggots which grow inside the human body and which drained out the energy of the human being and thus hastened his demise.

In theory, if a person was successful in all the endeavours mentioned above, he would become immortal. There are some documentary clues which suggest that these Taoist activities were being practised several centuries before the Christian era.

For example, an allusion of *Chuang-tzu* reveals that abstention from the five cereals, respiratory exercises, and meditation were regarded as conducive to everlasting life (Ch'en 1964: 25). In Taoist terminology, those who practise these methods and finally attain this immortality are generally known as *chen-jen* (真人, or "Real Men"), or *hsien* (仙): they are able to live indefinitely with a youthful body, free from the suffering of disease, old age and demise (Needham 1956: 141; Jên Chi-yü 任繼愈 1987: 17). In iconography, in order to reveal the principal characteristic of *chen-jen*, or *hsien*, -- that their bodies are ethereal and light enough to fly -- they were often portrayed as feathered men, as shown in Figure 2.10.

In terms of the spiritual journey of the devotee, getting in touch with these immortal beings was believed to be an aid in the quest for immortality. These supernatural beings -- *chen-jen*, or *hsien* -- were believed to reside in celestial palaces made from gold and silver and where all the beasts were white (Jên 1987: 17), but such palaces were inaccessible. The places where the devotee was most likely to meet these eternal beings were either remote mountains, or temples built to accommodate those deities when they descended from their celestial palaces.

In relationship with the divinities of the trinity (Heaven, Earth, and Man) mentioned in 2.3.1., there were also three Taoist deities (the Three Pure Ones) who corresponded to them: first, T'ien-pao chün (天寶君, "Heavenly Precious Lord"), or Yüan-shih t'ien-tsun (元始天尊, "First Original Heavenly Venerable One"), governor of the past kingdom; secondly, Ling-pao chün (靈寶君, "Precious Spiritual Lord"), or T'ai-shang yü-huang t'ien-tsun (太上玉皇天尊, "Great Jade-Imperial Heavenly Venerable One"), ruler of the present kingdom; thirdly, Shen-pao chün (神寶君, "Precious Divine Lord"), or Chin-kuan yü-ch'en t'ien-tsun (金闕玉晨天尊, "Pure Dawn Heavenly Venerable One appearing from the Golden Palace"), the king of the kingdom to come (Needham 1956: 160). In Taoist temples, a hall was built to worship

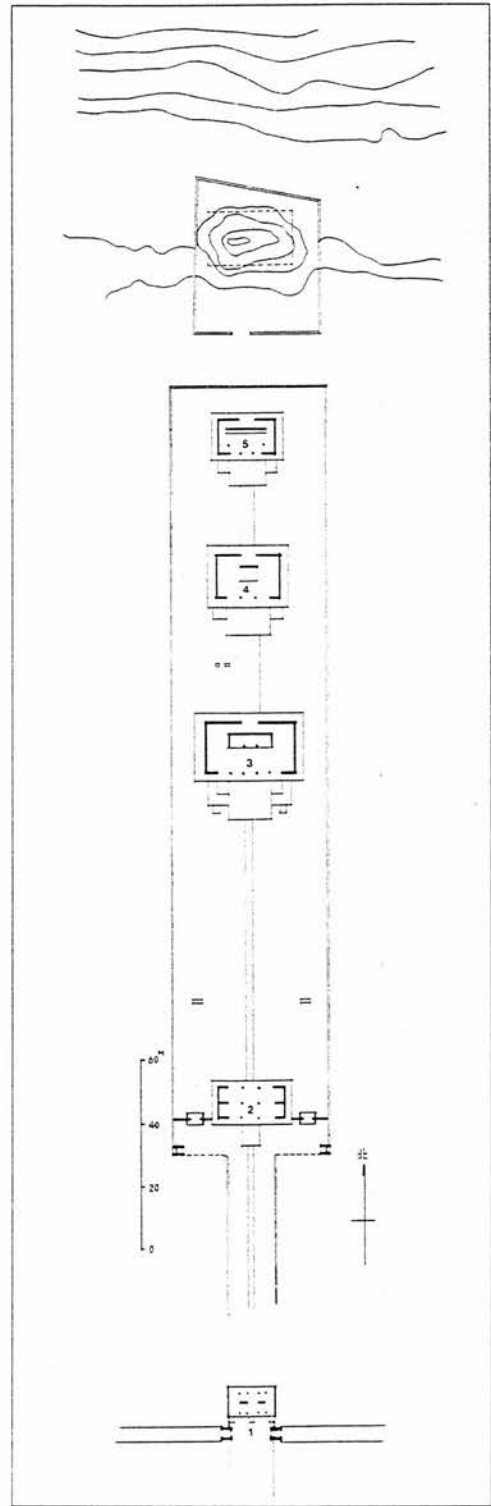


Figure 2.10. Feathered *chen-jen*, or *hsien*, (Needham 1956: 141) -- (Left)

Figure 2.11. Plan of Yung-le-kung 永樂宮, "Palace of the Eternal Bliss", Shansi province: 1. gatehouse, 2. Wu-chi-men, 3. San-ch'ing-tien, 4. Ch'un-yang-tien, 5. Ch'ung-yang-tien (Liu 1989: 132) -- (Right)

the trinity, known as San-ch'ing-tien (三清殿, the "Hall of the Taoist Trinity"). A typical instance is found in Yung-le-kung (A.D. 1212) where the hall is placed in the centre of the temple, as shown in Figure 2.11., to reveal its supreme status.

To sum up, in Taoism, the universe is regarded as governed by an invisible and omnipotent order, known as Tao, which provides exoterically the evidence of the order of the universe before our eyes, and yet permeates and partakes esoterically in everything. In terms of its nature, the Tao, possesses both physical and metaphysical characteristics, and yet cannot be defined. Correlated with traditional Chinese cosmology, the Tao is regarded as the origin of the universe from which Heaven, Earth, and Man were born and nourished. The germinal Tao is compatible with the doctrine of the germinal Centre of Buddhism (see 5.2.) -- both acknowledged no omnipotent creator-deity. In this connection, its worldview was also reflected in the sinicised Buddhist cosmology (see 2.4.2.).

On the whole, in contrast to the Confucian ideology which is characterised by its rationalism -- axuality, hierarchy, and symmetry -- what the Taoist is concerned with is feeling, intuition, and the mysticism of life. When applied to architecture, its ideas of freedom, experiment, and contemplation are expressed by the rounded and flowing lines and patterns of nature expressed in the Chinese garden (Nuttgens 1983: 67). These two philosophies, reconciled and shown to be complementary, are embodied within the designs of traditional Chinese architecture.

2.4. THE BASIC BELIEFS OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

Chinese Buddhism originated from Indian Buddhism and the traditional Chinese beliefs discussed above. In developing its own ideas, Chinese Buddhism inevitably inherited a certain amount of the original beliefs. The discussion which follows of the doctrine of salvation and the Buddhist cosmology, which form the main part of the basic beliefs of Chinese Buddhism, is thus mainly based on the ideas of its Buddhist and Chinese antecedents.

2.4.1. The doctrine of salvation

In Buddhism, the essence of the doctrine of salvation is what the Buddha disclosed in his First Sermon (see 2.2.2.) -- the Four Noble Truths (*si-sheng-ti* 四聖諦, or *chatvâri-ârya-satyâni*), which are: first, *ku* (苦, or *duhkha*), i.e. since it is also subject to decay, decess and death, life is suffering; secondly, *chi* (集, or *samudaya*), i.e. this suffering has a cause, which is hungering for sensual pleasures; thirdly, *mei* (滅, or *nirodha*), i.e. the suffering can be removed; fourthly, *tao* (道, or *mârga*), i.e. the way leading to the removal of the cause is the practice of the "Middle Path" (*chung-tao* 中道). The followers of the Middle Path will experience liberation from the endless cycle of rebirths and attain salvation.

In Buddhism, the Middle Path is an eight-fold Path (*pa-cheng-tao* 八正道 or *ashtângika mârga*), and the eight components are: the right view (*cheng-chien* 正見, or *samyag-drishti*), the right thoughts (*cheng-si* 正思, or *samyak-sankalpa*), the right speech (*cheng-yü* 正語, or *samyag-vâk*), the right actions (*cheng-yeh* 正業, or *samyak-karmânta*), the right means of livelihood (*cheng-ming* 正命, or *samyag-âjîva*), the right exertion (*cheng-ch'in* 正勤, or *samyag-vyâyama*), the right mindfulness

(*cheng-nien* 正念, or *sanyak-smriti*), and the right meditation (*cheng-ting* 正定, or *samyak-samâdha*).

As far as Buddhist discipline is concerned, this eight-fold Path can be grouped into three exercises, known as *san-hsüeh* 三學 in Chinese. Of these three practices, the paths of right speech, right action and right livelihood are categorised as Buddhist moral conduct (*chieh* 戒), the paths of the right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration as Buddhist mental control (*ting* 定), and those of right views and right intentions as Buddhist intuitive wisdom (*hui* 慧).

In the discipline of "moral conduct", the Buddha instructs his followers to practise the right speech, right action and right livelihood, so as

"Not to commit any evil, to do good, and to purify one's own mind."
(Ch'en 1964: 6)

In the Buddha's view, any action that is damaging to oneself or to another is evil.

Therefore, he urges to all his disciples:

"When you wish to perform an action, consider whether it is going to be harmful to others, harmful to yourself, harmful to yourself and others; if it is, do not perform it, for it is an evil action whose fruit will be suffering." (Ch'en 1964: 6)

In the discipline of "mental control", the Buddha teaches his disciples to practise right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, so as to control the mind to resist the temptation of sensual pleasures. Here, control of the mind does not mean that Buddhism encourages the practice of austerities, or mortifying the senses. What the Buddha said was that we can control the mind and see things as they really are -- no longer regard things that are impure, and impermanent as pure and permanent. In this way, the Buddha believes that once the devotee unburdens himself of the disturbance of external temptation, he can then experience the states of bliss. On

the whole, the mental discipline is the response to the Buddhist belief that the root of all evil is craving for sensual pleasure.

In the teaching of "intuitive wisdom", the Buddha disciplines the devotees to practise the right views and the right intentions, so as to understand the Truth of the existence of beings, which are: all beings are in a constant state of suffering, all existence is transient, and there is no permanent soul, or self, in beings (*wu-wo* 無我). As has been discussed above, all beings are subjected to the "3 Ds": Disease, Decay, and Demise. Therefore, their life is suffering, and their existence is impermanence.

As to the Buddhist doctrine of no-self being, as I have mentioned in 2.2.2., the worldview of the traditional Indian included the idea of a permanent soul, which abides in the innermost heart of individual. Through the right ritual, when the individual soul unites with the universal soul, salvation is achieved.

In the Buddha's view, the body of individual is nothing but a combination of the physical and mental elements constituted by the "Five Bundles" (*wu-yün* 五蘊, "five *skandhas*" in Sanskrit): mind and body (*ming-she* 名色, or *nâmarûpa*), the aggregates (*hsing* 行, or *samskâra*), consciousness (*shih* 識, or *vijnâna*), contact (*ch'u* 觸, or *sparsa*), and sensation (*shou* 受, or *vedanâ*). The first bundle was "material", and the rest four were "immaterial" (see Needham 1956: 400). These "bundles" change their appearance every second, so does the whole complex of the body. In this sense, there is no permanent soul, or self, inside the body. The idea behind the Buddha's assertion, or what worries the Buddha, was that:

"Belief in a permanent soul breeds attachment, attachment breeds egoism, and egoism breeds craving for existence, pleasure, fame and fortune, all of which keep one tied to the round of existence" (Ch'en 1964: 8).

Once the existence of the permanent self is denied, all selfish desire and self-interest become meaningless, as do egoistic pursuits and the quest for personal pleasures and gains. In sum, as asserted in *Anguttara Nikaya* (3. 134) a Pali Buddhist scripture,

"Whether the Buddhas appear in the world or not, it still remains a firm condition, an immutable fact and fixed: that all formations are impermanent; that all formations are subjected to suffering; that everything is without an Ego." (Wu 1974: 223)

In terms of the doctrine of deeds (*yeh* 業 in Chinese, Sanskrit *karma*) and rebirth mentioned in 2.2.2., this doctrine of no permanent self may seem inconsistent: as the elements of body change all the time, so the actions of individual would have vanished in the next moment, so how does the individual accumulate the deeds and achieve the reward (rebirth into a better existence) for the accumulation. In the Buddha's view, once beings die and are reborn into another existence, the composition of their body (Five Bundles) scatters and reassembles immediately. But there exists a life stream which bridges the different lives within the endless cycle of rebirth (*lun-hui* 輪迴). That is to say, the previous deeds of beings retain an effect throughout the entire life stream; and the existence of beings is judged constantly within this life stream by the fruits of their own acts, which forms a chain of causation.

In the Buddhist sense, the chain of causation (*Yüan-ch'i fa* 緣起法, the "Law of Causation", *pratītya-samutpāda* in Sanskrit) involves twelve primary causes and secondary results, the so-called *shih-erh yin-yüan* (十二因緣, the "Twelve Causes and Results", the "Twelve *Nidānas*" in Sanskrit), as was disclosed in *P'u-yao ching* (普曜經, or *Lalitavistara sūtra*) of the 1st or 2nd century. In this chain of causation, the secondary results of beings arise out of the primary causes, as indicated in Table 2.2.

IGNORANCE (<i>avidyā</i> ; <i>wu ming</i> 無明)	causes the appearance of	the AGGREGATES (<i>saṃskāra</i> ; <i>hsing</i> , 行) (these are con- sidered to mean manifestations of the will)
the AGGREGATES (<i>saṃskāra</i>)	cause the appearance of	CONSCIOUSNESS (<i>viññāna</i> ; <i>shih</i> , 識)
CONSCIOUSNESS (<i>viññāna</i>)	causes the appearance of	MIND AND BODY (<i>nāmarūpa</i> ; <i>ming sé</i> , 名色)
MIND AND BODY (<i>nāmarūpa</i>) (lit. name and form)	cause the appearance of	the SIX SENSE-ORGANS (<i>ṣaḍāyatana</i> ; <i>liu ju</i> , 六入)
the SIX SENSE ORGANS (<i>ṣaḍāyatana</i>)	cause the appearance of	CONTACT (<i>sparsa</i> ; <i>chhu</i> , 觸)
CONTACT (<i>sparsa</i>)	causes the appearance of	SENSATION (<i>vedanā</i> ; <i>shou</i> , 受)
SENSATION (<i>vedanā</i>)	causes the appearance of	CRAVING ^d (<i>tṛṣṇā</i> ; <i>ai</i> , 愛)
CRAVING (<i>tṛṣṇā</i>)	causes the appearance of	GRASPING ^d (<i>upādāna</i> ; <i>chhü</i> , 取)
GRASPING (<i>upādāna</i>)	causes the appearance of	COMING INTO EXISTENCE (<i>bhava</i> ; <i>yu</i> , 有)
COMING INTO EXISTENCE (<i>bhava</i>)	causes the appearance of	BIRTH (<i>jāti</i> ; <i>séng</i> , 生)
BIRTH (<i>jāti</i>)	causes the appearance of	OLD AGE, SICKNESS, DEATH AND ALL MISERIES (<i>jarāmarāṇa</i> ; <i>lao ssu</i> , 老死)
OLD AGE, ETC., AND ALL MISERIES (<i>jarāmarāṇa</i>)	cause the appearance of	IGNORANCE (<i>avidyā</i> ; <i>wu ming</i> , 無明)

Table 2.2. The cycle of Twelve Causes and Results (Needham 1956: 400)

Once sufficient fruits of action have been collected, beings immediately escape from the cycle of rebirth and attain salvation -- in Buddhist terms, "realise *nirvâna* (*nieh-p'an* 涅槃)". *Nirvâna*, the essence of which is infinite and transcendental, is a very difficult concept to define in words. In negative terms, *nirvâna* is often defined as a state of absolute annihilation, exemption, and freedom -- annihilation to the cravings of sensual pleasures, illusion, and unreality, even to oneself (one's impermanent self), exemption from the circle of transmigration, a state of utter freedom from all forms of existence. In positive terms, *nirvâna* is frequently described as a state of highest spiritual tranquillity and bliss; moreover, with regards to meditation, it is explained as "the resting place from which one can perceive all things (*chih-kuan* 止觀)", or "the fixed state of meditation (*ch'an-ting* 禪定)" (Karl Ludvig Reichelt 1934: 68).

Nirvâna can be defined in terms of human lifespan. According to the Buddhist scriptures, there are two periods of time during which men can attain salvation -- during life (*nirvâna*) and after death (the final *nirvâna*, or *palinirvâna*). If we take the Buddha Sâkyamuni as an example, he attained his *nirvâna* at the age of thirty-five, and achieved his final *nirvâna* (*palinirvâna*) at his demise at the age of eighty.

For the Buddha, who attained the *nirvâna* during life, his human Five Aggregates continued, but his cravings for sensual pleasures were abandoned. As regards the final *nirvâna*, the time of cessation of all existence, as in the case of the death of the Buddha, the scriptures do not provide much definition -- the state of final *nirvâna* remains undefined. Even the Buddha was reluctant to elucidate the matter. He once told his followers that

"Any attempt to answer such a question would be like entering a jungle or wilderness for the result would be misery and despair rather than absence of craving, quiescence, wisdom and *nirvâna*." (Ch'en 1964: 10)

In his preaching, the Buddha urged his followers not to speculate the state of *nirvâna* after life, but to concentrate on pursuing salvation in the present religious life, i.e. *nirvâna* during life.

To sum up, the Buddhist doctrine of salvation was embodied in the "Four Noble Truths", in which the first two Truths were to unveil the truth of human life (life is suffering, its cause is craving, or desire), and the next two were to point out the right approach to achieve salvation (there is a way to overcome the suffering, and this way is the practice of Middle Path, or the Eight-fold Path).

In his teachings of the Eight-fold Path, the Buddha set up disciplines, which include those of moral conduct, mental control and intuitive wisdom, for devotees to follow in their spiritual journey towards salvation. In the first discipline (moral conduct), the Buddha urged his disciples not to commit any evil acts, so as to keep their own mind pure; in the second (mental control), the Buddha taught his followers to control their mind so as to resist the desire for sensual pleasures; in the third (intuitive wisdom), the intention of the Buddha was to awaken the wisdom of devotees so that they might understand the Truth of beings' life, namely the suffering existence of beings, the transient existence of beings, and the impermanent self, or soul, of beings.

Of these three truths concerning beings' existence, the first two were testified to by the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths mentioned above, which reveals the 3Ds (Disease, Decay, and Demise) of human existence. In order to elucidate the third one (the impermanent self, or soul of beings), the Buddha explained the truth from the point of view of the human body, by declaring that the human body is composed of five elements, both physical and mental, which function together during life, and scatter at death. In terms of endless transmigration, the idea of which was adopted

from Brahmanism, the five elements of beings recomposed into another combination at their rebirth. In this view, there is no permanent self, or soul, continuing through all the existences of beings.

In addition, the composition of the elements of beings, although changed in each existence, were connected by a life stream. By this view, good deeds which have been accumulated towards the reward of a better rebirth, can be stored up throughout the life of beings in their whole life stream without being lost at each rebirth. That is to say, beings are examined by the fruits of their own past acts of every life at every rebirth. Connected in this way, the causes of existences and the results of deeds as a whole form one chain, which, in Buddhists' views, involves twelve primary causes and secondary results.

Once sufficient fruits of good deeds are accumulated, beings are freed from suffering, cease feeling desire for sensual pleasures, are exempt from the cycle of rebirth, and attain salvation. In this respect, salvation (*nirvâna*) is better elucidated in negative terms, the absolute annihilation of suffering, craving, and transmigration, although the positive terms of elucidation, such as a state of highest spiritual tranquillity and bliss, are not uncommon in the teachings of the Buddha. Moreover, in the Buddhist sense, *nirvâna* can be achieved both during life and at death. Of these two options, the Buddha urged his followers to pursue the former one, that by which the devotee can experience bliss in his lifetime without wasting time in speculating about the bliss of the unknown and the mystery of after-life.

2.4.2. Buddhist cosmology

Buddhism does not acknowledge any creator or personal god behind the universe. As has been shown above, it has no such concepts as creation, the original germ of all things, the soul of the world, or personal and impersonal principles. The only eternal thing is the causality of deeds (*karma*) and the endless succession of cause and effect. It is these "deeds" that create the world, as revealed in *Anguttara Nikâya*,

"My action [or *karma*] is the womb that bears me [or the world]".

That is to say, a new world is born as the result of the accumulated force of its predecessor's acts, rather than being created by any eternal divinity or having evolved out of some spiritual germ.

Furthermore, because of the endless succession of cause and effect, the Buddhist universe is in a constant state of becoming. Appearance (*cheng* 成), stagnation (*chu* 住), destruction (*huai* 壞), and emptiness (*k'ung* 空) are the four stages in this perpetual cycle through which the universe revolves eternally (Reichelt 1934: 76), as illustrated in Figure 2.12. In this context, the universe around us with all its visible phenomena is an existing entity made out of nonentity, and destined to fade again into nonentity when its time has elapsed.

The period during which a physical universe is established or destroyed is called a *kalpa*. There are many great *kalpas* (*mahâkalpa*) and small *kalpas* (*antarakalpas*). The period of one cycle of universe change is called a great *kalpa*, and eighty small *kalpas* makes a great *kalpa*. In Buddhist terminology, in the first twenty small *kalpas* (a *kalpa* of creation, or *vivartakalpa*), the world is completed; in the second (a *kalpa* of the duration of the creation, or *vivartasthâyikalpa*), the world remains in a constant state; in the third (a *kalpa* of dissolution, or *samvartakalpa*), the

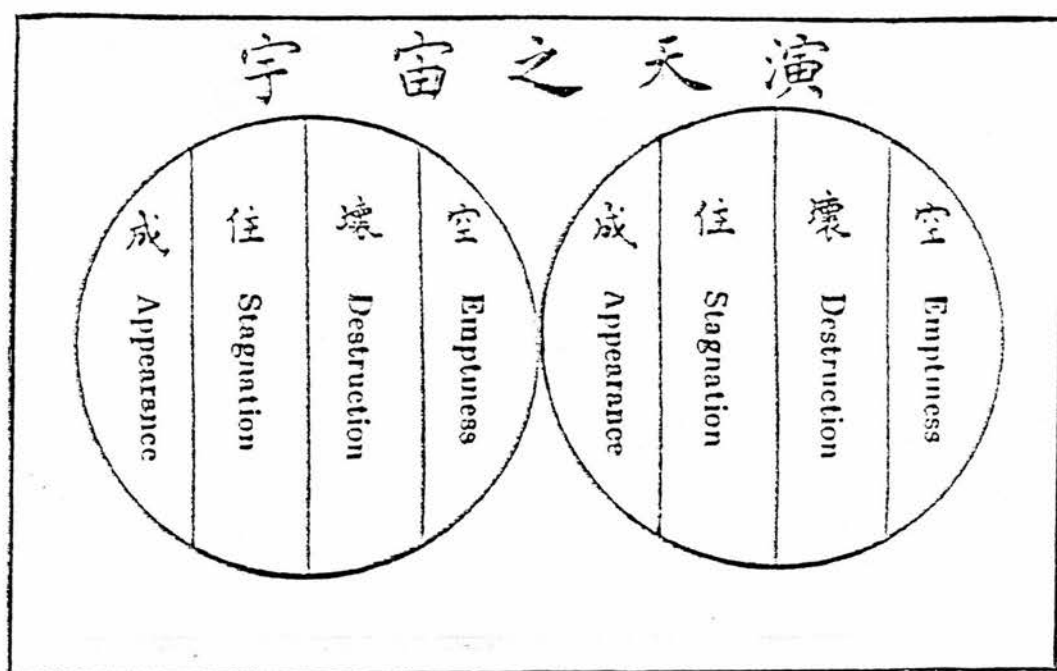


Figure 2.12. The cyclic course of the evolution of the universe (Reichelt 1934: 76).

world is destroyed; and in the last twenty *kalpas* (a *kalpa* of the duration of the dissolution, or *samvartasthâyikalpa*), there is nothing but void. According to the Buddhist calendar, the first period of the world

"began with the Sâkyamuni Buddha and ended five hundred years after his death. It is called *cheng-fa* (正法), [or the 'Right Model Period']. The second period lasts from the end of *cheng-fa* for another five hundred years and is called *hsiang-fa* (像法), the period in which pictures must be used, [that is to say,] in this period men must work their way to the truth through pictures and books. From the end of the second period and lasting for a further two thousands years comes *mo-fa* (末法), the [destruction] period. Then sin and need are increased to such a degree that Buddhism itself apparently goes to pieces." (Reichelt 1934: 75-6)

After these three periods, nothing remains but empty space.

The stream of human life (cf. 2.4.1.) can be seen as parallel to this, going through all these periods, which form a cycle for further movement. Although the world we live in seems to continue ever onward, always much the same, there is lodged deep in the human mind a fear that it will finally come to an end. Buddha's prediction that "The living beings all over the world shall become Buddha", is a source of light and consolation to the weary hearts of people on Earth (Reichelt 1934: 76), and furthermore, the Bodhisattva Mi-lo (彌勒, or Maitrêya)³⁷ will appear with his millennial kingdom and start a new cycle of life, bringing hope and redemption for all living beings. One cycle will follow another until all living beings are redeemed.³⁸

³⁷ Maitrêya Bodhisattva is one of the leading figures in the Chinese Pure Land cult. According to the description of *Mi-lo hsia-sheng ching* (彌勒下生經, *Maitreya-vyâkarana sūtra*), this Buddhist deity who dwells now in the Tusita heaven, will descend in the future to Earth to become a Buddha and attain enlightenment so as to provide salvation for all beings. That is why the Maitrêya Bodhisattva is also called the Future Buddha (see Ho 1992: 118).

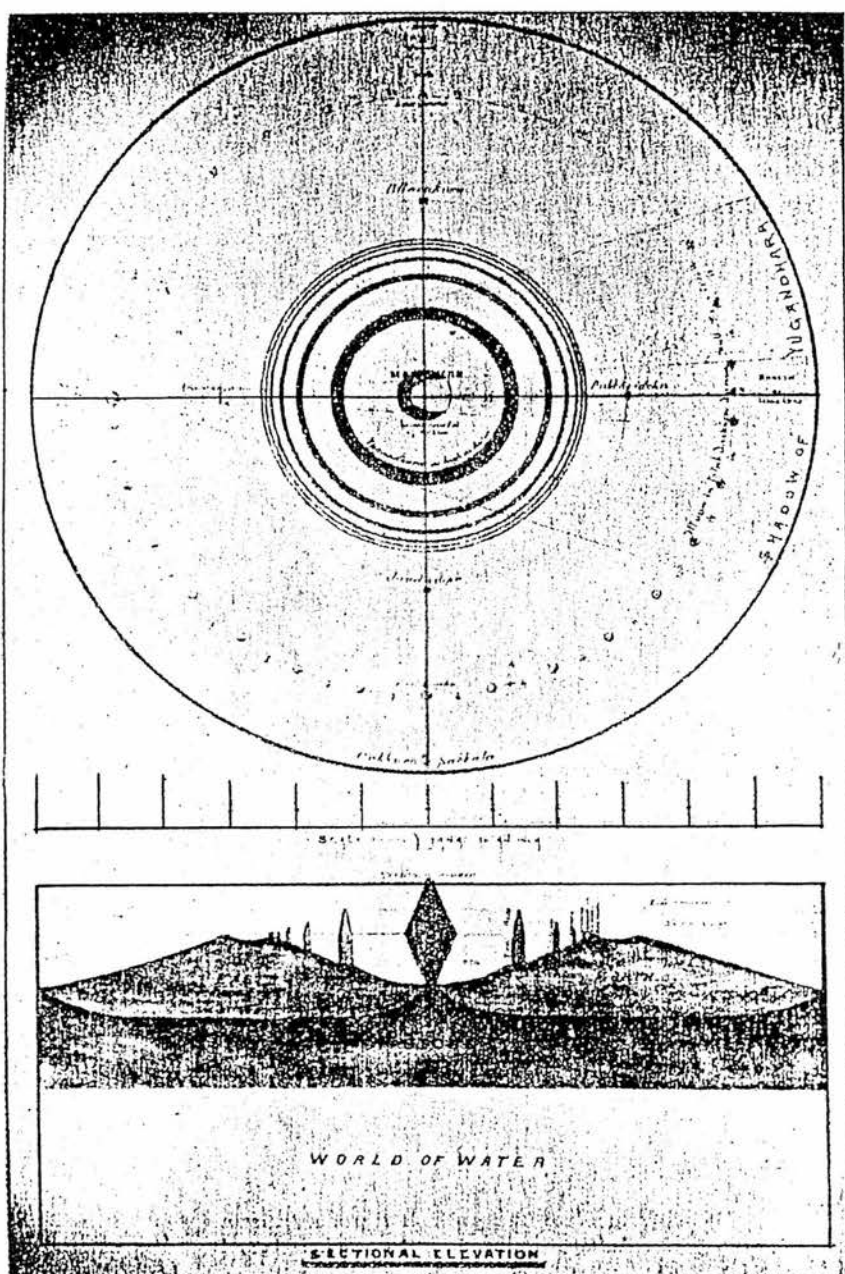
³⁸ The themes of salvation and rebirth can be found both in *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (*Saddharma-pundarika sūtra*), the main sutra of the T'ien-t'ai school, and the doctrines of the Pure Land school (Kloezi 1989: 9).

As for what exactly the universe is, according to the Buddhist scriptures,³⁹ and as can be seen in Figure 2.13., each successive world, the so-called single world system, has a Sumeru mountain, or Mt. Meru, in its centre, which is surrounded by seven other mountains. This gigantic mythical mountain, as shown in Figure 2.14., forms the pivot of the sphere. These mountain ranges, from the centre outwards, are designated as follows: Yugandhara, Isadhâra, Khadirika, Sudarsana, Asvakarna, Vinataka, and Nimindhara (W. Randolph Kloetzli 1989: 24). The regions between these are filled with the waters of various narrow seas (*sitâ*), and all of the mountains and seas are separated from the centre by a wide sea. Outside these mountains, beyond another wide sea (*mahâsamudra*) is a great circular iron (*cakravâla*) mountain, and because of this, the whole cosmological system is also called the Cakravâla-cosmology.

Within the *cakravâla* mountain wall, there are four continents and eight intermediate sub-continents located in the great ocean *mahâsamudra*, and a sun and moon to shine upon them. The main four continents are situated at the four points of the compass and the names and aspects of these land masses are as follows: Pûrvavideha in the East, Jambudvîpa the South, Aparagodâniya the West, and Uttarakuru the North. Among these, the southern Jambudvîpa continent is a notable one and paid more attention to by the Buddhists. There is a "diamond throne" situated in the middle of the continent where Bodhisattvas attain the state of Buddha. Therefore, as Kloetzli (1989: 27) points out, "it is only in Jambudvîpa during a time of declining life that a Buddha will appear."

Furthermore, there are a mountain called Himavat and a lake called Anavatapta in the north. As described in *Mahâ-prajñâpâramitâ-sâstra*, the lake is filled with lotuses

³⁹ These Buddhist scriptures include *Ch'ang a-han ching* (長阿含經, *Dirghâgama*), *Chung a-han ching* (中阿含經, *Madhyamâgama*), *Ta-pan-jo lun* (大般若論, *Mahâprajñâpâramitâsâtra*), and *Abhidharmakosa*, etc.



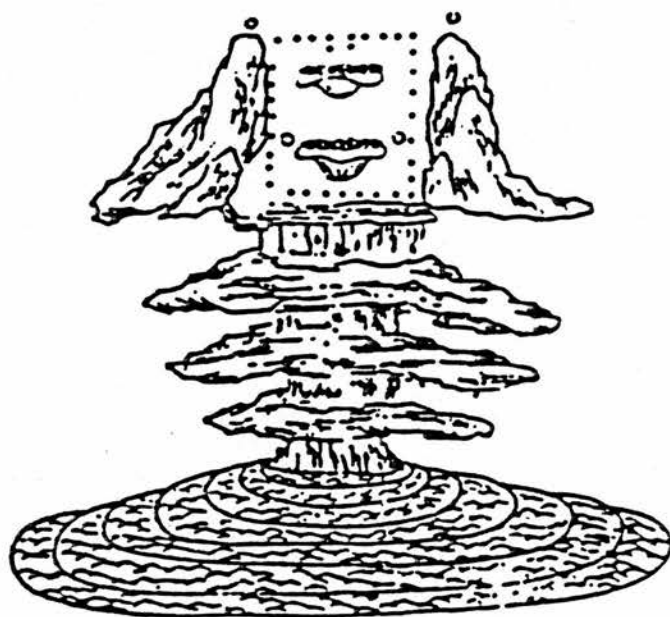


Figure 2.14. A diagram of Mt. Meru (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 220)

the colour of gold (Etienne Lamotte 1949 trans.: 450). Near the lake, there is a Jambu tree from which the continent derived its name. Issuing from the lake, there are four great rivers, namely, the Gangâ, the Sindhu, the Vaksu, and the Sitâ. Among these, the Gangâ is the one which flows through the region where Sâkyamuni was born; and whose sand (*gangânadivâlukopama*) is frequently said to symbolise the countless Buddhas and their realms in the ten regions of space (Kloetzli 1989: 119-21).⁴⁰

This region of mountains, seas and continents is what constitutes the "Earth", and above and below it come Heaven and Hell. In this way, the world is built up into a three-region system: the pure (*visuddha*) Heaven region, the mixed (*misraka*) Earth region, the *sahâ* world, and the impure (*avisuddha*) Hell region. But these three-regions can also be grouped into three major realms, as depicted in Table 2.3.: the first realm -- the Realm of Desire or Kâmadhâtu -- includes Earth, Hell and the first division of Heaven, or the Heaven of Desire; and the second and third realms -- the Realm of Form or Rûpadhâtu, and the Realm of Non-Form or Ârûpyadhâtu.-- are in fact the second and third Heaven divisions.

The numerous beings who dwell within the three regions of this world can be categorised into six orders "the Three Good Divisions -- Heavenly Gods, Human Beings, and *Asuras*; and Three Evil Ways -- Beasts, Ghosts, and Damned Beings." In turn these six orders are subdivided into many thousands of lesser categories. Basically, each has its own personality and particular dwelling place in the system of successive tiers that the Buddhists envisage rising above one another and dividing the infinite space above, upon, and below the tangible world of mountains, seas and continents. Despite these demarcations, in terms of the law of transmigration, the six divisions are seen as an entirety.

⁴⁰ Here "the ten regions of space" refers, in general sense, to space in all directions.

Table 2.3. Hierarchical system of the Buddhist cosmology
(Author; cf. Kloetzli 1989: 33-4).

III. Realm of non-form [Ârûpyadhâtu]		4. Neither consciousness nor not-consciousness [Naivasanjnânâsanjnâ]	
		3. Realm of nothingness [Âkincanya]	
		2. Infinity of intellect [Vijnânânantya]	[Caturârûpya Brahmaloka]
		1. Infinity of space [Âkâsânantya]	
II. Realm of form [Rûpadhâtu]	4th meditation [dhyâna]	8. Not youngest [Akanistha] 7. Well-seeing [Sudarsana] 6. Beautiful [Sudrsa] 5. Not heat [Atapa] 4. Effortless [Avrha] 3. Abundant fruit [Brhatphala] 2. Merit-born or Merit-begetting [Punyapravesa] 1. Cloudless [Anabhraka]	----- Abodes of the Pure Ones [Suddhâvâsika] -----
	3rd meditation [dhyâna]	3. Complete beauty [Subhakrtsna] 2. Immeasurable beauty [Apramânasubha] 1. Limited beauty [Parittasubha]	
	2nd meditation [dhyâna]	3. Radiant gods [Âbhâsvara] 2. Immeasurable splendor [Apramânâbha] 1. Limited splendor [Parittâbha]	
	1st meditation [dhyâna]	3. Great Brahmâs [Mahâbrahma] 2. Brahmâ-priests [Brahmapurohita] 1. Retinue of Brahmâ [Brahmakâyika]	
			[Brahmaloka]
		6. Rulers over things created by others [Paranirmitavasavartin]	
		5. Those who have their pleasure in creation [Nirmânarati]	
		4. Blissful gods [Tusita]	
		3. Yâma [Yâma]	[Devaloka]
		2. Gods who have the thirty-three at their head [Trâyastrimsa]	
		1. Four great kings or Regents of four directions [Caturmahârâjakâyika]	
		4. Mankind [Manusya]	
		3. Ghosts [Preta] (Abode is Yama; below Meru)	
		2. Animals [Tiryagyoni] (Special abode is the Exterior Ocean)	
		1. Damned [Naraka] (Abodes are the Hells)	

Each category is at once an order of being and a possible step on the pathway of any individual soul. Essentially, the idea of transmigration arises from the belief that man has an inherent desire to create, a desire which determines his deeds, or actions (*karma*). These actions determine his future destiny and the possible paths his soul will take (Reichelt 1934: 67-75).⁴¹ As is shown in Figure 2.15., within transmigration, the six orders will chain closely together as a wheel or a cycle. In Chinese, the cycle of transmigration, the continuous alternation of birth and death, is called *lun-hui* (輪迴), the wheel which turns or returns, the wheel of life. In the following paragraphs, I shall discuss all these three realms in more detail.

The region above the Earth is called Heaven which, as the name signifies, is a sacred place inhabited by beings of the first order -- heavenly gods. In this celestial region, there are altogether twenty-seven successive tiers of heavens (Kloetzli 1989: 25),⁴² but these twenty-seven heavens can be grouped into three major divisions.

The first and lowest division, consisting of six tiers, each called Kâmadeva, or "Heaven of Desire", is known collectively as Devaloka, the place where the *devas* reside, and belongs to the Realm of Desire, Kâmadhâtu, mentioned above. Here, the senses are still active and subject to desires, though there is freedom from the passions which are felt in the regions of desire nearer the world of men.

The gods who dwell in the Heaven of Desire include two groups: the Earth-Dwelling Gods and the Sky-Dwelling Gods (Snodgrass 1985: 329-30). The Earth-

⁴¹ The Mahâyâna Buddhist idea of transmigration, which prevailed in China, was in fact a version of the position of Hinayâna Buddhism which in turn had been taken from the Indian *Vedas*.

⁴² Variations on the number of heavenly tiers can be found in Snodgrass (1985: 330-1), in which they are counted as twenty-eight, and in *Traibhûmi Brah R'van*, (see Geroge Coedes and Charles Archaimbault 1973: 6f) which has them as twenty-six. The variation between the figures is mainly because of the different number of tiers being calculated in the second realm.

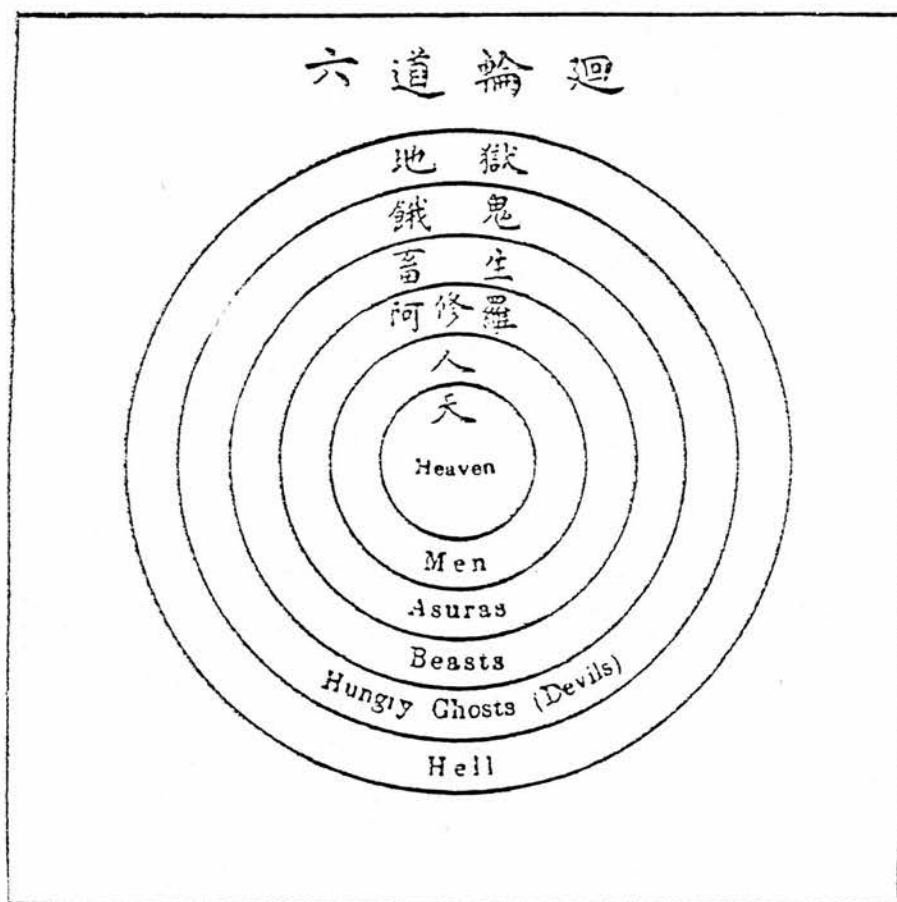


Figure 2.15. The six great divisions of beings in the Wheel of *Karma* (Reichelt 1934: 76)

Dwelling Gods include the four celestial kings (Caturmahârâjakâyika, or the "Regents of the Four Directions"), whose abodes rest on the four terraces (*parisanda*), which extend half-way up Mt. Meru, and the thirty-three gods (Trâyastrimsa) who resided on the summit. Here, the Trâyastrimsa Heaven (*tao-li-t'ien* 忉利天 in Chinese)⁴³, as shown in Figure 2.16., is the heaven where the Buddha announced his Law. To become an inhabitant of these celestial worlds is regarded as a reward for good actions, for those who have previously lived in lower states of existence. But it is still a punishment when viewed in comparison with the attainment of *nirvâna* or any of the higher grades of discipleship under the teaching of the Buddha.

Above Mt. Meru are heavens where the Sky-Dwelling Gods reside, namely, Yama ("Heaven of Time"); Tusita ("Heaven of Contentment") where Maitrêya resides before he is born as a Buddha; Nirmânarati ("Heaven of Joyful Transformation"); and Paranirmitavasavartin, ("Heaven of Free Transformations by Others") (William Montgomery McGovern 1923: 66).

The next heavenly division, consisting of seventeen tiers, is called the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu), known as the region inhabited by the Brahma (Brahmaloka). In this area, beings possess their true forms. They enjoy a higher condition of existence in which there is no distinction of sex, and all sensuous desires and objects have lost their hold over the body. This is the condition that the exercise of meditation

⁴³ Originally, according to *Leng-yen ching* (楞嚴經, the *Suraangama sûtra*), the Trâyastrimsa Heaven (*tao-li-t'ien*) is a collective term used for all the thirty three tiers of sub-heaven and their twenty eight subsidiaries. The arrangement of these tiers of sub-heavens is that there are eight tiers of sub-heavens and their seven subsidiary heavens at each of the four points of the compass, and one central sub-heaven where Indra or Sakra, (Ti-shih 帝釋 in Chinese), rules in majesty. Furthermore, *Leng-yen-ching* also stresses that the soul can ascend through *tao-li-t'ien* by overcoming the three *chieh* (界, "Great Spheres"), i.e. *yü-chieh* (欲界), where craving is in charge, *she-chieh* (色界), where the external appearance of things appeals to the senses, *wu-she-chieh* (無色界), where the desire for materialisation remains (Reichelt 1934: 69-70; Snodgrass 1985: 329-30; and Kloetzli 1989: 29).



忉利天宮之圖

Figure 2.16. A diagram of the Trâyastrimsa Heaven (Ho 1992: 71)

(*dhynâna*) is designed to achieve and all these seventeen tiers are grouped in relation to four stages of meditation (*catur-dhyâni-bhûmi*),⁴⁴

"suggesting that they are important principally as yogic goals for those who have mastered the highest skills of inner concentration." (Jeffrey F. Meyer 1992: 75)

Among these seventeen tiers of heavens, three are in each of the first three stages of meditation, and eight in the fourth. The five uppermost of these are *Suddhâvâsika* (the Abodes of the Pure Ones), and the highest one is *Akanistha*, "Heaven of the Final Limit of Form" (Snodgrass 1985: 330; and Kloetzli 1989: 30).

The uppermost heavenly division, which consists of just four tiers, is called the Realm of Non-Form (*Ârûpyadhâtu*). It is the infinite realm beyond all form, beyond all contraries -- pure nothingness, and is known collectively as *Caturârûpya Brahmaloka*. Its four tiers are also matched with the four stages of meditation (*samâpattis*) as follows: the first, *Âkâsânantyâyatana* ("Heaven of Limitless Space"), is equivalent to the meditative state in which all physical phenomena are negated; the second, *Vijnânantyâyatana* ("Heaven of Pure Consciousness"), to the state in which empty space is negated; the third, *Âkincayâyatana* ("Heaven of Nothingness"), to that in which Pure Consciousness is negated; and the fourth, *Naivasamjñânasamjñâyâyatana* ("Heaven of Neither Consciousness nor Non-Consciousness"), to that in which both Consciousness and the absence of Consciousness are negated (Snodgrass 1985: 330).

In sum, Figure 2.17. displays the hierarchy of heavens. In terms of the spiritual progress of the Buddhist monk in his path toward the state of Enlightenment, all these three heavenly divisions can be further classified into nine successive stages of meditation (*navânupûrvavihâra*). The first stage is in the Heavens of Desire

⁴⁴ There was also another account regarding the number of the stages of meditation. According to *Abhidhamma*'s calculation, there are not four stages of meditation but five (see Paranavitana 1954: 223).

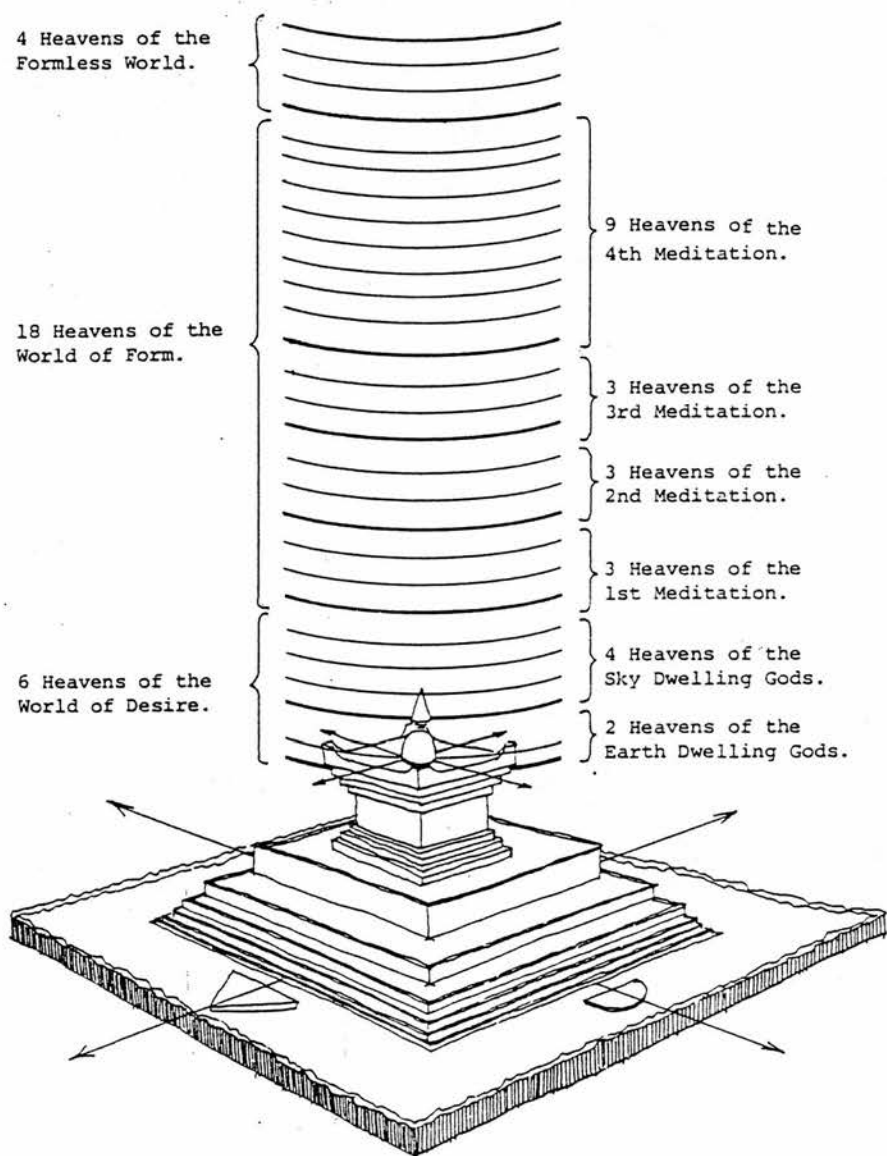


Figure 2.17. A diagram of the hierarchy of heavens (Snodgrass 1985: 331)

(Kâmadeva), the next four (the *dhyânas*) in the Heaven of Form (Rûpadhâtu), and the final four, (the *samâpattis*) in the Heaven of Formlessness (Ârûpyadhâtu) (Kloetzli 1989: 30).

The next region of the system is Earth which is part of the Realm of Desire mentioned above, and is inhabited by beings of the second order -- that is, human beings. In this region, men and women alike share the human form, and yet possess the social differences (richness or poverty, stupidity or cleverness, beauty or ugliness, happiness or misery, and so on) between them, which have been, according to the law of transmigration mentioned above, determined by deeds (*karma*) done in their previous life or lives. People

"who have a good root [*shan-ken* 善根] strongly developed in their hearts, and who themselves foster its further growth through a dutiful and gentle human life" (Reichelt 1934: 70-1)

will, on the cessation of this mortal life, ascend to the Heavenly gods' order. Many, however, spoil their chances by leading an unholy and sensual life. After death they may be born into the order of Beasts, and become an animal (*chu-sheng* 畜生). In this order, its members are transformed from the most vicious human beings on earth, enlisted from the ranks of evil-doers, criminals, convicts, delinquents, and so on. As determined by their evil deeds, each of these beings assumes his own particular animal form.

In Chinese, this degradation can be put more clearly by the concept of *yin-kuo* (因果, or the "Law of Retribution"). Under this Law, the punishment which has been decided by the previous deeds (*karma*) will take its unalterable course. After death, the offending soul will travel along its destined path and arrive at the lower or evil orders. However, the future destiny of a soul can always be revised by man's own desire to improve his lot during his time on Earth. In order that he may see how his actions are affecting his future destiny -- whether he will be rewarded or not, or what kind of

punishment he deserves -- there has to be a well-designed organisation of supervision which, in China, has long been recognised, and, over the course of time, has spawned a complete system.

In this system of supervision, a group of spiritual officers from the organisation are assigned to record the good or evil deeds of human beings. These reports are then given to equivalent officials in both Heaven and Hell, so as to carry out the punishment or reward in due time, as the old Chinese proverb maintains:

"Good is recompensed with good, evil is recompensed with evil; and if payment is slow in coming, it is because its hour has not yet arrived."
(Reichelt 1934: 73)

Moreover, this system in course of time came to be interwoven with the notions of Chinese secular legal system -- when the Earthly spiritual officers execute their duty, they are allocated regions of responsibility and integrated into a hierarchy very similar to that of their Earthly counterparts. That is to say, the whole area of the Earth is regarded as being constituted by myriad of small regions, each of which is governed by a local superintendent, called *t'u-ti-kung* 土地公, or the "God of the Earth", who is directly in charge of the supervision. Temples (*t'u-ti-miao* 土地廟) are built all over China to worship these local deities. Their presence in cities as well as in the countryside allows them to carry out their mission of supervision over every inch of the Earth's land.

Apart from the local superintendent (*t'u-ti-kung*), there are higher ranking officers who are in charge of a larger area. Their titles vary, depending on the area they govern: *cheng-huang* (城隍, or the "City Gods") in the city area, and *ti-huang* (地隍, or the "District Gods") in country districts. The names of the temples vary in similar fashion: *cheng-huang-miao* (城隍廟) in the city, *ti-huang-miao* (地隍廟) in the country (Ibid.: 73). For the Chinese, these temples are seen, in spiritual terms, as

the spiritual equivalent of the Chinese government office (*ya-men* 衙門), in which so many criminals are dealt with. In sum, by means of the union of Buddhist beliefs and the Chinese secular legal system, Buddhism has strengthened its hold on the faith of the Chinese people, and become a religion with obvious intermediaries serving a populace burdened by sin and guilt.

In the Earthly region, there are also beings of the third order -- *asura*. These *asuras* are half sacred, half profane -- it is their nature to be constantly divided, struggling between the spheres of holiness and evil. Nevertheless, the "half good" is significant enough to allow this order to be listed among the three good Divisions -- even if O-hsiu-lo 阿修羅, the chief of *asuras*, is thought to abide at the bottom of the ocean, a dark and comfortless place (Reichelt 1934: 71).⁴⁵

The region under Earth is called Hell (*ti-yü* 地獄, or *naraka*), which also belongs to the Realm of Desire. The creatures who have sunk down into this prison of the lost are to be pitied, because the Buddhists believe in an atrocious and appalling Hell where punishment is protracted for a long cosmic time (over *kalpas*).

The region of Hell is divided into many tiers, one above the other, ranging from the place where there is the most scorching heat down to that which is icy cold. According to *Abhidharmakosa*, there are sixteen tiers -- eight hot tiers and eight cold tiers; and all these tiers are located underneath the Jumbudvipa continent (Kloetzli 1989: 28). Chinese Buddhism introduced a more horrible eighteen-tier Hell, known as *wu-chien-ti-yü* (無間地獄). Here, beings die and live again and again in ceaseless torment with new pains and tortures. Moreover, Hell as a whole can be divided into

⁴⁵ Variation on the abode of the *asuras* can be found in Kloetzli (1989: 34, fig. 3). Here the *asuras* inhabit Yama, the place below Mt. Meru.

ten courts, as shown in Figure 2.18., which are governed by the ten kings and an overlord, namely,

"Tung-yueh -- overlord, 1. Chin-kuang, 2. Chu-chiang, 3. Sung-ti, 4. Wu-kuan, 5. Yen-lo -- chieftain, 6. Pien-cheng, 7. Tai-shan, 8. Tu-shih, 9. Ping-teng, 10. Chuan-lun." (Reichelt 1934: 72)⁴⁶

Apart from the overlord Tung-yü (東獄), the chieftain Yen-lo (閻羅) and the rest of the nine kings, there are numerous evil spirits, known as hungry ghosts (*o-kui* 餓鬼), wandering around Hell. These ghosts are beings of the fifth order; and their work in Hell is to serve as the assistants in carrying out the punishments. The characteristics of these beings, as Reichelt (1934: 74) points out, are as follows.

"These are the creatures who have sunk so deep that they rejoice in evil, and who therefore gladly allow themselves to be used as assistants and co-labourers in all kinds of destructive enterprises by the more 'professional devil princes'. They enter gladly into the service of the 'hangmen' and torture to their hearts' content the lost in hades."

For those beings who have sunk so deep as the region of Hell, and either become ghosts or damned beings, there is always a hope that, when countless *kalpas* have passed, the Buddha will descend to the region to save them. The eventual salvation of these condemned beings lies in their faith that the aim of the Buddha is to salve all beings. This faith echoes the Buddhist belief that there is no everlasting Hell.

To sum up, the universe we live in is built in a three-region system -- the Heaven, Earth, and Hell regions. Beings who dwell within the three regions of this world can be categorised into six orders -- heavenly gods, human Beings, *asuras*; animals, ghosts, and damned beings. The inhabitants of the Heaven region are beings of the first order -- the heavenly gods. In terms of its inner structure, the region consists of three major divisions which are in turn subdivided into six, seventeen, and

⁴⁶ Within the Buddhist temple premises, there is rarely any special hall representing Hell. Such are actually found much more frequently in Taoist temples. In fact, the Buddhist ideas of Hell play so little a role that they do not influence the general plan of the Buddhist temple to a sufficient extent to be considered as one of its features.

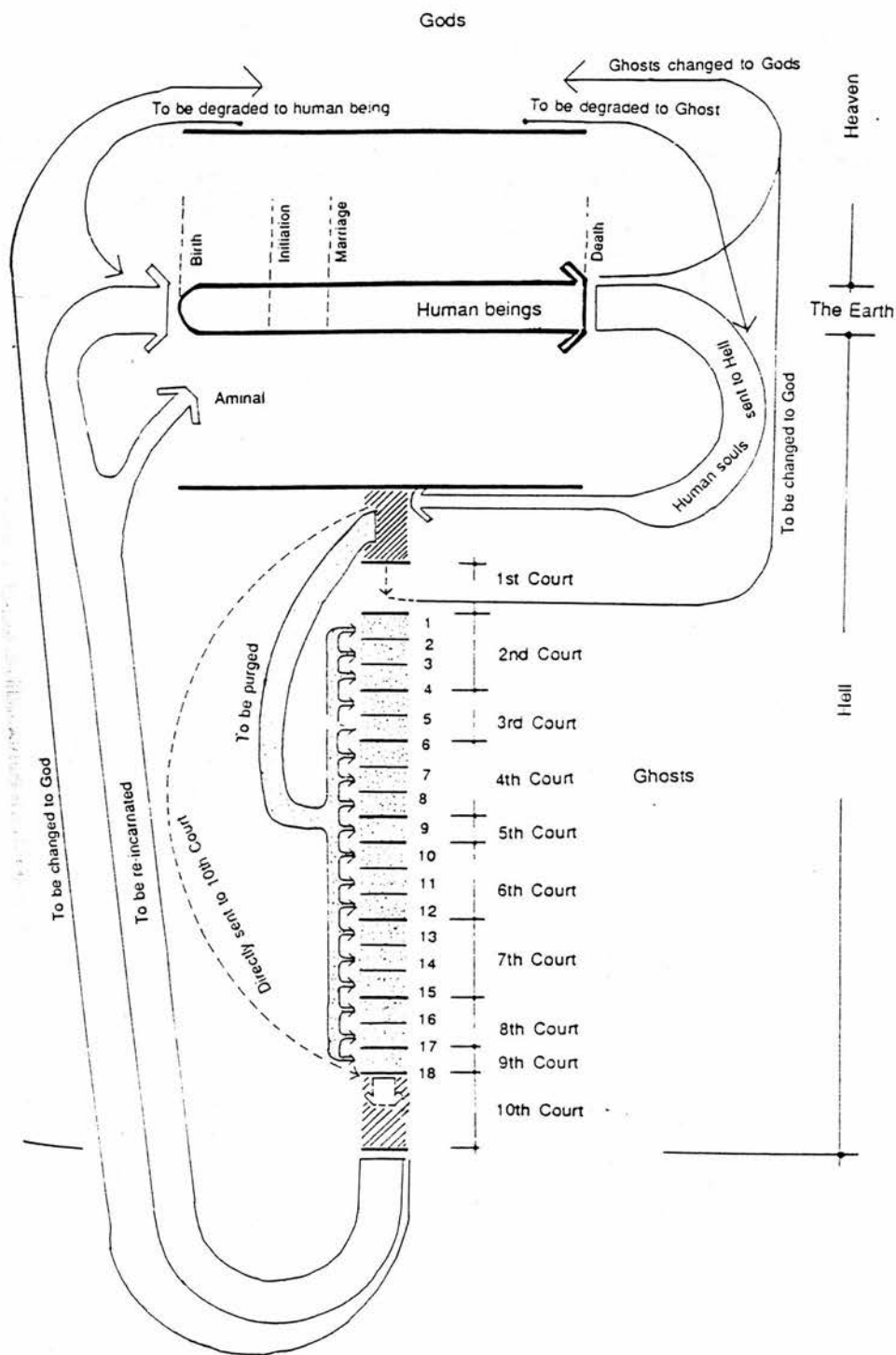


Figure 2.18. The ten courts of Hell (Lin 1993: 134)

four tiers. The Earth region is inhabited by beings of the second, third, and fourth order, namely, the human beings, *asura*, and beasts. The Hell region, which is subdivided into ten courts, is governed by an overlord and ten kings; and the residents of the Hell are beings of the fifth, and sixth order -- the hungry ghosts and damned beings. Here, each of the six orders of beings is regarded as a possible destination of a being in the transmigration process; and the future destiny and possible paths his soul will take is determined by his previous deeds.

The universe as a whole, in which the Heaven, Earth, Hell regions are three major divisions, thus serves as a stage whereon the drama of salvation is enacted. Furthermore, as stated before, because of the endless succession of cause and effect, the universe is constantly appearing, disappearing, and reappearing. In this view, the number of manifestations of the universe is infinite.⁴⁷ The schools of Hinayâna Buddhism have a "cosmology of thousands", or Sâhasra-cosmology (Meyer 1992: 74-5).⁴⁸ The characteristics of the Sâhasra-cosmology, as Kloetzli (1989: 51) points out, are

"the combinations of thousands of worlds and the superimposition of the one cosmic level upon another ..."

In Buddhist terminology, *trisâhasramahâsâhasralokadhâtu* is the term used to express the numerology of the "thousands", and it has been translated and interpreted in a variety of ways throughout the Pali and Chinese texts. For example, *Anguttara Nikâya* presents a "Triple-Chilicostm world-system", *Jâtakas* and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* a "Ten Thousand Worlds system", and the teachings of the Chinese

⁴⁷ According to Buddhaghosa's *Atthasâlini* (sec. 160), "four things are infinite: space, the number of universes, the number of living beings and the wisdom of a Buddha" (Kloetzli 1989: 4, n.2). Here, the notion of the infinite universe is closely related to that of the created Buddhas (*nirmânabuddhas*) who are the products of the multiplication of the Buddha.

⁴⁸ The Hinayâna school which presents the notion of the Sâhasra-cosmology is the Sarvâstivâdin school.

T'ien-t'ai school a "Three Thousand Great Worlds system".⁴⁹ All these world systems are closely related to the measurement of cosmic time. That is to say, all of the thousands of worlds can be

"framed by the passage of *mahâkalpas* [or the great *kalpas*] which are the units of cosmic time for the Buddhists." (Kloetzli 1989: 61)

Moreover, in order to specify the Buddha field to which the thousands of universes belong, Kloetzli (1989: 51) continues to point out that,

"... all the various combinations of worlds ultimately belong to the realm of a single Buddha, a single Buddha field, *buddhaksetra*, or similarly unifying entity. In general, [they] are related to divisions within the Brahmaloaka, the realm of the *dhyâna* heavens, [i.e. the second heavenly division]."⁵⁰

In contrast to this, Mahâyâna Buddhism presents the "cosmology of innumerables", or Asankhyeya-cosmology, with a focus on the multi-Buddha world-system. That is to say, the infinite universe, instead of being stationed in a single Buddha field as in Sâhasra-cosmology, is assigned in this Asankhyeya-cosmology to the innumerable Buddha fields which are distributed throughout the ten regions of space, signifying the omni-presence of the Buddha for saving all sentient beings.⁵¹

The doctrinal basis of this cosmological spatial speculation, as revealed in *Ta-pan-jo lun* (大般若論, or *Mahâ-prajñâpâramitâ sâstra*), is that "according to Mahâyâna, time does not exist." (Lamotte 1949: 1694-6) Therefore, as Meyer (1992: 74-5) concludes,

"[Hinayâna Buddhism has a 'cosmology of thousands' with a focus on time, while that of Mahâyâna may be called the 'cosmology of

⁴⁹ The Triple-Chilicosm world system is formulated by *Anguttara-Nikâya* (I. 227) as follows: one thousand universes constitute a small chilicosm, one thousand small chilicosms a middle chilicosm, and one thousand middle chilicosms a great chilicosm.

⁵⁰ In Buddhist terms, a single Buddha field is inhabited by an enlightened Tathâgata teaching the Dharma for the benefit of sentient beings.

⁵¹ Here the ten regions of space, which include the four cardinal regions (i.e. East or *pûrvâ*, South or *daksinâ*, West or *pascimâ*, and North or *uttarâ*), the four intermediate regions (i.e. Northeast or *uttarapûrvâ*, Southeast or *pûrvadaksinâ*, Southwest or *daksinapascimâ*, and Northwest or *pascimottarâ*) as well as Zenith or *ûrdhvam*, and Nadir or *adhah*, signify universality (see Kloetzli 1989: 99).

innumerable', with a focus on the ten regions of space, themselves symbolic of an infinite universe."

Basically, despite their differences, these two Buddhist world systems are both infinite in space and time.

2.5. THE SCHOOLS OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

By the end of the seventh century, Indian Buddhism had been largely sinicised on Chinese soil. As Ch'en (1964: 360) points out,

The whole body of Buddhist teachings introduced into China had been successfully digested by that time, and the Chinese mind was now ready to put forth its own interpretation of Buddhism. No longer were the Chinese to be held in bondage by Indian ideas and practices; they were now in a position to go forward with fresh ideas and new practices.

In course of the sinicisation, the concepts of Buddhism were developed by a number of Chinese Buddhist schools, namely, the Meditation school (Ch'an-tsung 禪宗), the Pure Land school (Ching-t'u-tsung 淨土宗), the T'ien-t'ai school (T'ien-t'ai-tsung 天台宗), the Hua-yen school (Hua-yen-tsung 華嚴宗), and the Tantric school (Mi-tsung 密宗). In the following sections, I shall address the ideas of each in turn.

2.5.1. The Meditation school (Ch'an-tsung)

The aim of the Meditation school, or Ch'an-tsung, is to uncover the fundamental unity, or the Buddha nature, in the innermost recesses of all sentient beings, in order to achieve salvation; in the Ch'an view, this can be accomplished by means of meditation or the intuitive method of spiritual training. Here, Ch'an, which is a transliteration from the Sanskrit word *dhyâna* or *jhyana*, is the abbreviated form of *ch'an-na* (禪那), or meditation.

In China, the first patriarch of the Ch'an school was Bodhidharma (P'u-t'i-ta-mo 菩提達摩) (A.D. ?-475),⁵² although the Chinese monks Tao-an (道安) (A.D. 312-385) and Hui-yüan (慧遠) (A.D. 341-416) were believed to have preached the Ch'an idea and emphasised the importance of Ch'an exercises before him. After Bodhidharma, the Ch'an patriarchate was passed on to Hui-k'e (慧可, A.D. 486-593), Seng-ts'an (僧粲, A.D. ?-606), Tao-hsin (道信, A.D. 580-651), Hung-jen (弘忍, A.D. 602-675), and then to Shen-hsiu (神會, A.D. 600-706) in the north and Hui-neng (慧能, A.D. 638-713) in the south.⁵³ With the fading of the northern school in A.D. 753 (For details, see Ch'en 1964: 354), the southern school was seen as the legitimate Ch'an school, and Hui-neng was regarded as its sixth patriarch. After Hui-neng who preached the doctrine of the instantaneous Enlightenment, there were five Ch'an branches, namely, Lin-chi (臨濟), Ts'ao-tung (曹洞), Kuei-yang (潯仰), Yün-men (雲門), and Fa-yen (法眼),⁵⁴ each of which devised its own realisation of this doctrine and the techniques for reaching that aim of sudden Enlightenment.

⁵² In India, Bodhidharma was regarded as the twenty-eighth patriarch of the Buddhist religion, where Sâkyamuni was the first one. The arrival of this worthy is recorded in many historical documents. The earliest source is undoubtedly the *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi*, which reports that a Persian monk named Bodhidharma was greatly impressed with the magnificence of the Yung-ning (永寧) temple (built in A.D. 526). In *Hsü kao-seng chuan* (續高僧傳) and *Ching-tê ch'uan-têng lu* (景德傳燈錄), they record that he first reach the Liu Sung (劉宋) territory in A.D. 520, and then went north to the Northern Wei kingdom. There he practised a Ch'an technique -- the wall contemplation (sitting in front of a wall) -- for nine years in order not to be disturbed. Afterward, this technique was transferred to Hui-k'o as the idea of "the straight-standing wall" which had since become a classical expression amongst the Buddhists, referring to the calming effect of meditation in seclusion (see Ch'en 1964: 351-2 and Reichelt 1934: 40, 335).

⁵³ Shen-hui was an energetic and influential preacher, who was honoured by the emperors as the master of the law in the capital of Lo-yang in A.D. 700. He was generally acknowledged as the leader of the Northern Ch'an school. However, according to *Ching-tê ch'uan-têng lu*, the standard Ch'an version, Hui-neng was the one who received the patriarchal robe, the symbol of the transmission from Hung-jen, as the leader of Ch'an school mainly preaching in the southern China (see Ch'en 1964: 353-6).

⁵⁴ In the fifth generation from the sixth patriarch, the Lin-chi and Ts'ao-tung were formed. And the Kuei-yang, Yün-men and Fa-yen were formed in the fourth, eight and ninth generation respectively. Of these the first two were the most important, while the remaining three never enjoyed a large following and soon disappeared from the scene. The name of branches are taken from the place where the founders of the respective schools resided.

The main text of the school is *Ju lêng-ch'ieh ching* (入楞伽經, or the *Lankâvatâra sūtra*, "Descent to the Island of Lanka"), which was passed on by Bodhidharma to Hui-k'e. The sutra emphasises full consciousness of the Tathâgata-womb⁵⁵ in all of us. It teaches that salvation is made possible by realising this inner Enlightenment.

Basically, the purpose of Ch'an, as mentioned above, is to awaken the Buddha nature in the innermost recesses of beings. Moreover, as has been discussed in 2.2.2. and 2.4.1., the human body is a combination of the transient "Five Bundles"; and there is emptiness (*sûnyata*), i.e. no permanent self, within the innermost recesses of beings. The realisation of the reality of void, or no permanent self, will lead the devotee to the extinction of the craving for sensual pleasures.

In relationship with the doctrine of the emptiness addressed above, the school teaches that the Buddha nature, the fundamental reality, is essentially void (*sûnya*), which is characterised by its ineffability and incomprehensibility. In Ch'an ideas, this ineffable and incomprehensible Buddha nature can only be appreciated by way of an intuitive method of spiritual training. That is to say, in order to apprehend the Buddha nature, one must not have thought of permanent self, or try to force one's mind to make an effort. As Ch'en (1964: 358) explains, what harm conscious thought might cause, and what conscious efforts the devotee ought to annihilate, as follows.

"In any conscious thought the ego is at work, making for distinctions between subject and object . Conscious thought also begets karma [the previous acts], which ties one down to the endless circle of birth and death, and breeds attachment to external objects. Such conscious efforts as heeding the teachings of the Buddha, resiting the sutras, worshipping the Buddha images, or performing the rituals are really of on avail and should be abandoned. Instead, one should allow the mind to operate freely, spontaneously, and naturally."

⁵⁵ Tathâgata, the One Thus Coming, was the first one to attain Buddhahood. Buddhata has been regarded as the essence of Buddhahood. The Tathâgata-womb, i.e. the Buddhata, thus means the very nature of Buddha which constitutes the Buddhahood (Wu 1974: 222).

In practice, the Ch'an master I-hsüan (義玄) urged his followers to

"kill everything that stands in your way. If you should meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha. If you should meet the patriarchs, kill the patriarchs. If you should meet the arhats on your way kill them too."
(*Ch'an-shih yü-lu* 禪氏語錄; TSD 47,500b; Ch'en 1964: 358).

Once the conscious mind of permanent self is annihilated, and the conscious efforts to apprehend the Buddha nature are terminated, the devotee will experience the awakening, termed *wu* (無, "nothingness"). In this state of Enlightenment, the intuitive response of performing right actions occurs involuntarily and naturally. In association with this term, the Buddhahood was elucidated as *wu-hsin* (無心, or "No Heart or Mind"), by Hui-chung (慧忠), one of the disciples of the sixth patriarch of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism, Hui-neng. In this view, absolutely nothing should be left in the mind of one who has reached the stage of Buddhahood. In other words, one who is always thinking about or seeking to attain Buddhahood will never be able to get there, because reaching Buddhahood means having no conceptions whatsoever, or reaching the state of nothingness.

In cultivating the unconscious and intuitive mind, Ch'an Buddhism in general resorts to the meditation technique, the religious discipline aimed at the self-introspection that leads to the devotee's dispensing with sensual pleasures. In practice, the devotee starts the exercises with the control of his breath. Once the devotee breathes smoothly, he then concentrates on some objects so as to rid himself of certain sensual desires. For example, the devotee focuses on fears of the body in various stages of decomposition so as to eliminate any attachment to sensual pleasures. In addition, the devotee centralises himself on infinite love for all sentient beings (*metta*) so as to expel the feeling of hate and anger. In sum, the aim of the meditation exercise is to keep the devotee away from sensual temptation and to awaken the inner Buddha nature.

In particular, the Lin-chi branch introduces a technique of what may be called "shock therapy" to awaken the inner Buddha nature. The branch holds that beings have essentially the power in their own mind to awaken the Buddha nature; and this innermost power can be approached by implementing this therapy, that is, by the master's shouting at the disciple, physically beating him, or presenting him with a riddle -- termed in the Lin-chi branch *kung-an* (公案, a "case" or a "problem") -- which is unsolvable.⁵⁶ Here the presentation of a no-answer riddle is meant to remind the devotee of the doctrine of no conscious thought and that any intellectual answer to the riddle is an obstacle in awakening the Buddha nature. The object of the therapy as a whole is "to jolt the student out of his analytical and conceptual way of thinking and lead him back to his natural and spontaneous faculty" (Ch'en 1964: 359).

To sum up, the final goal of the Ch'an school of Chinese Buddhism is to awaken to the Buddha nature that exists in the innermost recesses of all sentient beings. In uncovering the nature of the inner Buddha-nature and the way to apprehend it, the school, in association with the doctrine of the emptiness, teaches that the Buddha nature is essentially ineffable and incomprehensible and can only be approached by the intuitive method of spiritual training, known as Ch'an. Here, the intuitive method involves the elimination of the conscious thought of permanent self and of all conscious efforts for achieving the goal. When the Buddha nature is awakened, the devotee achieves the state of *wu* (nothingness), that is, the Enlightenment, or the Buddhahood, in Ch'an terms. In practice, the school and its branches introduced a variety of intuitive methods of spiritual training. However, the final aim of all practices are the same, that is, to achieve the awakening of the Buddha nature.

⁵⁶ In contrast to the aggressive tactics of the Lin-chi, the Ts'ao-tung branch preaches the method of silent introspection -- sitting in meditation, the devotee being taught to observe the innermost mind or nature in tranquillity.

In its relationship to traditional Chinese beliefs, the Ch'an school works in harmony with both Confucianism and Taoism. In its passing-on of leadership and documentary authority, the Meditation school emphasises the lineage of its masters; and because of this, the school operates in consonance with the Confucian traditions of paying reverence to the aged and honouring the wise (Robert E. Fisher 1993: 107). Moreover, the doctrine of the school which stresses natural instinct and spontaneous intuition, is close to the beliefs of Taoism. It was largely for these reasons that it became so readily popular in China.

2.5.2. The Pure Land school (Ching-t'u-tsung)

Another prominent school of Buddhist thought in China is the Pure Land school (Ching-t'u-tsung). The aim of this school is to preach the belief in the western Pure Land where the Buddha Amitâbha presides over and preaches the Dharma. The salvation of the devotee of this school lies simply in having faith in the Buddha and eventually been reborn in the Pure Land.

The Chinese monk Hui-yüan (慧遠, A.D. 341-416), who was originally a Taoist believer, was regarded as the founder of the Pure Land school,⁵⁷ although the central ideas of the school had already been addressed at the time of Asvaghosha and Nagarjuna in the second century.⁵⁸ In chapter four of *Ta-ch'êng ch'i-hsin lun* (大乘起信論, or the *Mahâyâna Sraddhotpâda sâstra*, "Discourse on the Awakening of

⁵⁷ Originally the name of the school was Pai-lien-chiao (白蓮教, the "White Lotus Religion"). At the beginning of the 14th century, a secret society also adopted the same name. In order to avoid being drawn into the many agitations and complications of this society, the school changed its name to "Pure Land" which is used down to the present day.

⁵⁸ During the early spread of Buddhism to China, Nagarjuna (Lung-shu 龍樹 in Chinese) together with Asvaghosha (Ma-ming 馬鳴 in Chinese) played the major roles in introducing the Buddhist ideas to the Chinese. Both probably lived in the second century A.D. (see Reichelt 1934: 25-7).

Faith in the Mahâyâna"), which was written by Asvaghosha,⁵⁹ the belief of salvation in the Pure Land had already been depicted as follows.

"... If a man sets his mind to think only of Amitâbha Buddha who is in the happiest realm of the West, and if his good deeds are in right direction, and if he desires to be reborn there, he will then born there, and as he is always in the presence of Buddha, he will never fall back."
(Reichelt 1934: 120)

The first patriarch Hui-yüan, with his Taoist background, employed Taoist terminology to express Buddhist Pure Land concepts, such as

"*yü-tao* (遇 道), to become a monk; *tê-tao* (得 道), to become a saint; *chêng-tao* (成 道), to be perfected, to become a Buddha; *tao-ch'ang* (道 場),⁶⁰ the place of worship." (Reichelt 1934: 122)

In this way, the foreign Pure Land belief acquired a Chinese form.

After the master Hui-yüan came T'an-luan (曇 鸞, A.D. 476-542) who also devoted himself to the propagation of the Pure Land tenets.⁶¹ The success of the Pure Land notion, which was eventually so widely accepted in China, should probably be attributed primarily to the endeavours of the Pure Land master Tao-ch'o (道 綽, A.D. 562-645). It was about the time of the Southern and Northern dynasties that the theory of the decay of the Dharma, or the Law, prevailed in Chinese society.⁶² Tao-ch'o took this opportunity to teach his followers that the way of escaping from the period of decay was to put faith in the Buddha Amitâbha.

⁵⁹ The first Chinese version of the *Mahâyâna Sraddhotpâda sâstra*, which was written by the Buddhist monk Chen-ti (真 諦), or Paramartha (his Indian name), was published in A.D. 550 (Reichelt: 1934: 27).

⁶⁰ In Pure Land hymns and poems, the wish is often expressed: "May the four corners of heaven be transformed into a *tao-ch'ang*." (Reichelt 1934: 122)

⁶¹ Unlike Hui-yüan, T'an-luan's place in Buddhist society is based mainly on his efforts to spread the Pure Land teachings and practise among the whole society.

⁶² According to this theory there would be three periods in the duration of the Law: that of the true Dharma, that of the counterfeit Dharma, and lastly, that of the decay of the Law, which was thought to commence from A.D. 550 (For the cyclic course of the evolution of the world, see above 2.4.2.). During this final period of decay, the question was how was one to save oneself and society from the sins and vices so rampant during the age?

In preaching its belief, the Pure Land school takes *Ching-t'u ching* (淨土經, or the *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*, "Sutra of the Pure Land") as its primary text. This sutra exists in a larger and a smaller version, namely, *Wu-liang-shou ching* (無量壽經, or the larger *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*) and *O-mi-t'o ching* (阿彌陀經, or the smaller *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*).⁶³ In the larger version of *Sukhâvatîvyûha*, the initial text writes about a monk named Dharmakara, who, when he acquires the picture of the ideal Buddha land from the Buddha Lokeshvararaga, vows to save all beings and establishes a Pure Land where all beings can enjoy a happy life. The small version addresses the same idea. In addition, a third sutra -- *Kuan wu-liang shou-fo ching* (觀無量壽佛經, or the *Amita-yurdhyana sûtra*, "Sutra on Meditation concerning Amitayus") -- is also highly recommended as one of the principal sûtras of the school.

In these Pure Land *sûtras*, the ideal of Buddha and the Buddha Land was vividly depicted. According to a passage from the smaller *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*,

"After you have passed from here over a hundred thousand kotis of Buddha countries, there is in the Western part a world called Sukhavati [the pure land] and therein a Buddha by the name of Amitâbha [or Amitâyus] is now preaching the Law." (Reichelt 1934: 112)

In this book, the Sukhavati, or Pure Land, is depicted as an abundant and luxuriant land where aromatic trees and flowers are decorated with jewels and gems, and the running waters of the river produce pleasant sounds.

Moreover, this land whose residents are heavenly gods, is characterised as a happy one, where the Buddha Amitâbha preaches the Dharma. In this land, according to the same *sûtra*,

"suffering is unknown and all sentient beings there experience only various kinds of happiness." (Reichelt 1934: 113)

⁶³ The first Chinese version of the larger *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*, or *Wu-liang-shou ching*, was made in about the Han era. Many translations of the *sûtra* were produced subsequently, whereas, for the smaller *Sukhâvatîvyûha sûtra*, or *O-mi-t'o ching*, there is only one extant translation, which was made by Kumarajiva. (Ch'en 1964: 342)

Therefore, the Buddha urged his disciples that

"all beings who have heard about that Buddha country should make a vow that they shall be born there." (Reichelt 1934: 115)

In China, the ideas of this paradisiacal land were painted, or carved, upon the walls of temple halls and cave shrines, as shown in Figure 2.19., to strengthen the faith of devotees.

To turn to another key point, why is the governing Buddha of the land referred to Amitâbha, or Amitâyus? It is because, in etymological terms, the grandeur (*abha*) of the Buddha is boundless (*amita*) and the length of his life (*ayus*) is unlimited (*amita*) (Reichelt 1934: 115). In other words, this Buddha, whose life is infinite, emits from himself the boundless light and love for all sentient beings. According to the Pure Land teachings, he vows⁶⁴ that anyone who has absolute faith in him and the Pure Land will be reborn there.

As to the means of achieving rebirth in the Pure Land, *Wu-liang-shou ching* emphasises that it comes as the result of meritorious deeds as well as faithful devotion to Amitâbha; whereas *O-mi-t'o ching* specifically states that only faith and prayer are necessary. According to the latter, beings are not born into the Buddha country as a reward and result of good deeds performed in this present life, but by keeping the name of Amitâbha in mind (Ch'en 1964: 338).

Here, the Pure Land school introduces a very straight-forward and simple technique for keeping the Buddha's name in mind, namely, the continued recitation of the name of the Buddha. The master Tao-ch'o in his principal work *An-lo chi* (安樂集, or "Collection of Essays on the Western Paradise"), suggests the practice of *nien-fo* (唸佛), invoking the Buddha, or *k'ou-ch'eng nien-fo* (口稱唸佛), uttering the

⁶⁴ This vow is the eighteenth out of his forty-eight vows for becoming a Buddha (see Reichelt 1934: 132).

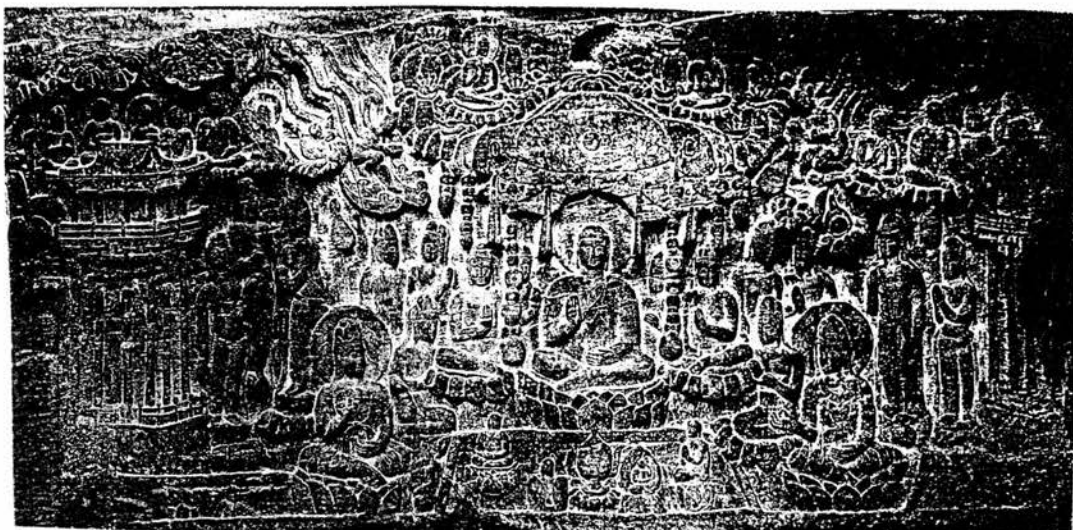


Figure 2.19. The Paradise of the Buddha Amitābha, 6th century stone relief (Fisher 1993: 101)

name of the Buddha repeatedly. Apart from the direct uttering of the Amitâbha's name, the formula *na-mo A-mi-ta-bha* (南無阿彌陀佛, or "Reverence Be To Amitâbha"), is the most common form uttered by the Pure Land devotee.

In Pure Land's view, if one were to repeatedly recite the Buddha's name with an undivided mind, all evil would be overcome and all sins eradicated, and one would certainly be reborn in the Western Paradise. Of course, there were other masters who presented other methods. For example, Shan-tao (善導, A.D. 613-681) in his principal work, *Kuan-ching su* (觀經疏, or "Commentary to the Sutra on Concentration"), for example, recommended five main activities, namely, uttering the name of the Buddha, chanting the sutras, meditating on the Buddha, worshipping images of the Buddha, and singing praises to the Buddha. All the same, uttering the name of the Buddha is the first and primary activity. Ultimately, all the solutions sought to achieve one goal: to overcome all evil, to eradicate all sins and to be reborn in the Western Paradise.

As has been stated in 2.2.3., the Hinayâna Buddhism conceives of deeds (*karma*) as being entirely personal and individual; whereas the Mahâyâna Buddhism suggests that the rewards of deeds are transferable from the Buddha or Bodhisattva to sentient beings. In Mahâyâna's view, sentient beings are not strong enough to achieve salvation by themselves. That is to say, they must depend on the merits transferred from the Buddha. In the Pure Land School, this transference is furnished by the Buddha Amitâbha. By keeping faith in him, it is believed that merits of deeds will be transferred, all evil will be overcome, all sin will be eradicated, and the devotee will certainly be reborn in the Western Paradise.

2.5.3. The T'ien-t'ai school (T'ien-t'ai-tsung)

The T'ien-t'ai school, in association with the Ch'an school, advocated a belief that the Buddha-nature exists within all beings. Moreover, the school, along with the Pure Land school, urged its followers to have faith in rebirth in Paradise and claimed that, rather than good deeds or personal sacrifice, a firm devotion is the primary means to salvation (Fisher 1993: 102). In sum, in preaching its doctrine, the school combines ideas of the other schools; in defining the way of achieving salvation, the school affirms the existence of the Buddha nature in all beings and employs all possible means to attain its realisation.

The T'ien-t'ai school was established by Chih-i (智 頤, A.D. 538-597) and it was because of his residence on Mt. T'ien-t'ai in Chekiang (浙 江) province that the school was called T'ien-t'ai. Chih-i, who was original a Ch'an believer, disagreed with some of the Ch'an claims that conscious efforts such as sutra learning should be discarded. He believed, as Reichelt (1934: 42) points out, that:

"By means of preserving study and reflection, not only would the apparently strong contradiction within the Mahâyâna scriptures disappear, but the truth-seeking soul would, by this very act, gain enlightenment and attain deep peace."

By the time of Chih-i, an enormous amount of Indian Buddhist texts had already been translated into Chinese. It was very difficult for the Chinese either to identify the chronological sequence of works, or to tell the Hinayâna writings from the Mahâyâna ones. In order to help the devotee to apprehend systematically the diversity of the teachings of the Buddha and to solve some of the fundamental metaphysical problems such as the way of achieving salvation, Chih-i worked out a systematic classification of the sutras, called *p'an-chiao* (判 教), which involved categorising the teachings

according to their methods, nature and chronology (Ch'en 1964: 305-10, Reichelt 1934: 43-5 and Needham 1956: 406-7).⁶⁵

This School takes *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (*Saddharma-Pundarika sūtra*, or the "Lotus Sutra"), as its principal source of tenets, and that sutra includes three great works, namely, *Miao-fa lien-hua ching hsüan-i* (妙法蓮華經玄義, or "Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra") in 20 volumes (*chüan* in Chinese), *Miao-fa lien-hua ching wen-chü* (妙法蓮華經文句, or "Textual Commentary on the Lotus Sutra") in 20 volumes, and *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (摩訶止觀, or "Great Concentration and Insight") in 20 volumes.

In its doctrines, the T'ien-t'ai school synthesises the doctrine of emptiness and the dichotomous nature of all things (phenomena and noumenon), and establishes a three-fold truth of all things in the world, that is, the truth of emptiness, phenomena and noumenon. In the T'ien-tai view, in order for beings to rid themselves of cravings for the sensual pleasures, it is essential for them to consider all things in a void. In its practices, the school introduces the cultivation of *chih* (止, or "Concentration"), and *kuan* (觀, or "Insight") for understanding the truth of the phenomenal manifestations of all things (these are emptiness, being only our illusions and imaginations), an understanding which may prevent us falling into the state of craving.

In addition, although all things are void, they still possess their temporary existence through manifestation. In conclusion, the essence of all things (noumenon) lies in the synthesis of emptiness (universality) and phenomenal existence

⁶⁵ By his classification Chih-i categorised the mass of Buddhist texts based on the five periods of the teachings of the Buddha: first, *Hua-yen ching* (華嚴經, *Buddha-avatamsaka sūtra*); secondly, *A-han ching* (阿含經, *Āgamas*); thirdly, *Fang-teng ching* (方等經, *Lankavatāra* and *Suvarna-prabhāsa sūtras*); fourthly, *Pan-jo ching* (般若經, *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*); and fifthly, *Fa-hua ching* (法華經, or *Saddharma-pundarīka sūtra*). The first sutra is a Yogācāra document; the second one belongs to the Hinayāna doctrine; the third, fourth and fifth are all Mahāyāna documents.

(particularity). For example, the Dharma, in Buddhist terms, is characterised by both universality and particularity. In other words, the universal Dharma is to be found in the individual, or in things of the world even as tiny as a grain of sand or a particle of dust.

Furthermore, in expounding this three-fold truth of all things, the T'ien-t'ai master emphasises the mutual identification of speciality and entirety. As revealed in the famous T'ien-t'ai phrase *i-nien san-ch'ien* (一念三千, "One Thought is Three Thousand Worlds"), the individual thought is identical with the three thousand worlds. That is to say, the individual thought and life of devotee, in terms of the Buddhist Sangha, is identical with the universal thought and life of the Buddha. Here, "three thousand" worlds means the universality of all things, or the whole universe which is constituted by ten realms, as shown in Figure 2.20.⁶⁶

The main contribution of the school lies in the systematisation of the Chinese versions of Indian Buddhist literature, which had been translated in large volume by the time of the founder Chih-i, and which preaches seemingly contradictory doctrines and ideas. By doing this, the school re-emphasises the value of the Buddhist sutra learning which the Ch'an school claims to have abandoned. However, in its doctrine of the three-fold truth, the school proclaims the mutual identification of speciality and entirety -- the universal Dharma is to be found in individual, and vice versa (the individual thought informs the universality of all beings). In this view, the school adopted the Ch'an school's idea of the inner Buddha nature.

To sum up, the object of the T'ien-t'ai School was to strike a middle path between the rejection of the sacred literatures in their entirety as advocated by Ch'an

⁶⁶ In the T'ien-t'ai view, each of these ten realms has ten sub-realms, and each of the sub-realm and ten features. Altogether, there are one thousand worlds. Moreover, each of the thousand worlds has three divisions. In this way, the whole universe has three thousand worlds (Ch'en 1964: 311-2, n.1)

一 念 十 法 界

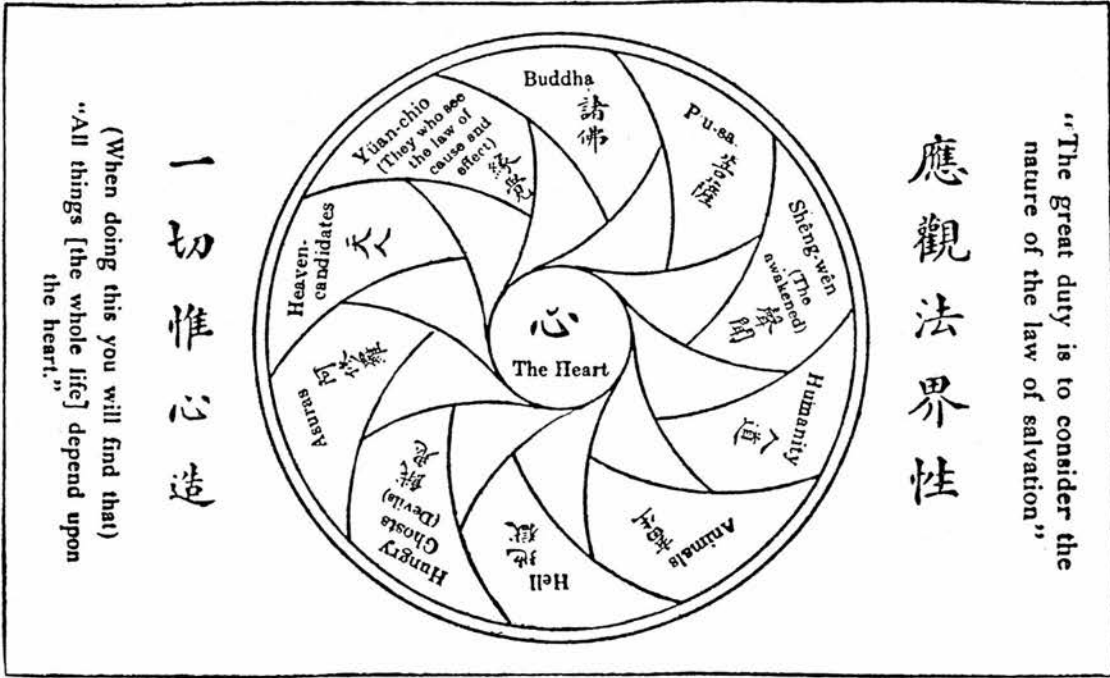


Figure 2.20. A diagram embodying the T'ien-t'ai idea
-- One Thought equals the Ten Realms (Reichert 1934: 76)

school and the full appreciation of them as proclaimed by others. In the T'ien-t'ai view, it is best to compare and combine these two developments of Buddhism, then to add a third reconciling principle, and by this reconciliation to enable people to employ all possible means to achieve salvation. The influence of this moderate, conciliatory thinking was enormous. As Reichelt (1934: 47-8) puts it,

"One must not judge the influence of this school by the number of the monasteries and monks who take their name directly from T'ien-t'ai, for their number is small. The real power is seen in the tremendous influence which the T'ien-t'ai school has exercised on the thought and practice of the earlier schools. One finds everywhere, both in ritual and in rules for living, a deep dependence on the teaching of the T'ien-t'ai school."

2.5.4. The Hua-yen school (Hua-yen-tsung)

Unlike the T'ien-t'ai school which concentrated its attention on the relationship between the noumenon and phenomenon, as has been discussed above, the aim of the Hua-yen school is to elucidate further the mutual relationship between one phenomenon and another. In China, Fa-tsang (法藏, A.D. 557-640) was the founder of the school. He is also known as the master Hsien-shou (賢首), for which reason the Hua-yen school is also referred to as the Hsien-shou school. The *Avatamsaka sūtra* (華嚴經, or "Garland Sutra"),⁶⁷ which was preached by the Buddha immediately after his Enlightenment, is the basis of the Hua-yen school of thought.

In its doctrines, the Hua-yen school shares the view of the T'ien-tai school that all beings in the world are essentially emptiness, and possess a two-fold nature of existence -- noumenon (*li* 理, or "Principle"), and phenomenon (*shih* 示, or "Phenomenon"). In defining the relationship between the noumenon and phenomenon, this school asserts that they are interfused with each other, and that all

⁶⁷ There exists three Chinese translations of this *sūtra*. They are *Buddhabhadra* (A.D. 418-420), 60 *chüan*, *Sikshānanda* (A.D. 695-704), 80 *chüan*, and *Prajñā* (A.D. 795-810), 40 *chüan*.

individual phenomena are mutually identified with one another. In other words, no phenomena can exist independently and since all phenomena are manifestations of the one immutable noumenon, they are in perfect harmony with one another.

The doctrine is revealed in *Chin-shih-tsu chang* (金獅子章, or "Essay on the Golden Lion"), which was written by the founder Fa-tsang. In the essay, Fa-tsang used a golden lion as a metaphor to elucidate the Hua-yen concepts, as follows.⁶⁸ In defining the relationship between the noumenon and phenomenon, he points out that the gold colour of the lion is *li*, or Principle; and the lion itself is *shih*, or Phenomenon. That is to say, the gold colour, or Principle, has no form of its own, but it directly informs the manifestation of the lion, or Phenomenon. Moreover, in explaining the mutual relationship between phenomena, he declares that the various organs of the lion, its eyes, ears or a strand of its hair, refer to the whole lion by the medium of their gold colour, so that any one organ is identified with all the others, as well as having the whole golden lion present in it. In turn, the golden lion is to be found by the agency of a single strand of golden hair.

In sum, all phenomena are manifestations of the one immutable noumenon; and among the phenomena, each individual is distinct from one another, but can be recognised as belonging to each other in the same noumenon. To take the golden lion as an example, the lion as a whole is the manifestation of its gold colour, and all the individual organs of the lion, which are dissimilar from each other, can be identified as belonging to each other by their gold colour. A total system is thus built up with every part of the lion, or the phenomena, leading to the gold colour, or the noumenon, signifying the relationship between generalness and speciality, similarity and diversity, integration and disintegration. In Buddhist terms, these mutable phenomena here

⁶⁸ This essay is based upon an occasion in A.D. 704 when Fa-tsang was summoned by Empress Wu Tse-t'ien (武則天) to explain the Hua-yen idea.

represent every individual being, and the immutable noumenon symbolises the Buddha nature which resides in the innermost recess of beings.

2.5.5. The Tantric school (Mi-tsung)

Basically, the teachings of the Tantric school, which is regarded as the third and final interpretation of the teachings of the Buddha,⁶⁹ are centered around the practices of Tantra, or the supernatural formulae (Eitel 1970: 169), such as the *mantras*, *mudrâs*, *mandalas* and *abhishekas*, and aim at the attainment of Enlightenment. In the view of Tantrists, salvation lies in the practice itself, rather than in understanding the sutra meaning. The school preaches the immediate salvation of the devotee through the mystic or magic efficacy of these formulae, dispensing with the need for any laborious and lengthy spiritual journey. As declared in its famous formula *chi-shên chêng-fu* (即身成佛), "One can immediately become a Buddha oneself".

In India, Anânda was regarded as the founder of the Tantric school (Reichelt 1934: 347). When the school was first introduced to China during the third century, it did gain some ground in preaching its ideas on the Chinese soil.⁷⁰ However, it was not set up as a school until the arrival of three Tantric masters, namely, Subbhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, during the T'ang era (ca. the 8th century).

⁶⁹ The first and second interpretations of the teachings of the Buddha are Hinayâna and Mahâyâna Buddhism.

⁷⁰ The first translation of the Tantric text was a *Matanga sūtra*, called *Mo-teng-ch'ieh ching* (摩騰伽經, A.D. 230), which reveals the doctrine of *mantras*. In about the fourth century, Buddhist monks, such as Fo-t'u-teng (佛圖騰), in China were already preaching with the practice of the magic formulae. In A.D. 462, the practice of the doctrine of *mandala*, concerning with the drawing of a circle for receiving offerings, was recorded in a text translated by Tan-yao (see Ch'en 1964: 332).

In practice, as mentioned above, by performing the supernatural formulae, the devotee can attain sudden salvation. But it was not as simple as that might seem. On closer investigation one finds that the effectiveness of this short cut depends upon the individual having the correct physical and mental attitude, the so-called *hsin-mi* (顯密, the "Exoteric Secret") and *pi-mi* (秘密, the "Esoteric Secret"). The *hsin-mi*, as Reichelt (1934: 346) points out, is the co-ordination of three physical actions that the master has taught: "How to sit, how to use your mouth (in prayer and invocation), and how to think" (身口意三業相應). Apart from the master's teaching, the real spiritual experience will be the esoteric secret (*pi-mi*) between the devotee and the Buddha. Here, the approach to discovering both exoteric and esoteric secrets involves, as mentioned above, the practice of the supernatural formulae -- *mudrâs*, *mantras*, *abhishekas* and *mandalas*.

To carry out the first two practices involves the employment of two human organs -- hand and mouth. In Tantrism, the *mudrâs* are the mystic signs formed by the hands and fingers; the *mantras* are a series of syllables which have lost their meaning. The Tantrists believe that the devotee, by forming the hand gesture correctly and uttering the no-meaning syllables in special formulae,⁷¹ can escape from the cycle of rebirth. In sum, in the view of the Tantrists, both the hand gesture and the syllables themselves are eternal but require a formulation and a chanting to be apprehended by our consciousness. "As the *mantras* contain all the secrets of sounds, so the *mudrâs* contain all the secrets of touch" (Ch'en 1964: 328).

As regards the third practice, *abhisheka*, salvation lies in the performance of the sexo-yogic ritual ceremony. According to Tantrism, the ceremony consists of two parts, which were implemented respectively by two groups known as the Right-hand

⁷¹ The special formula is such as the famous Tibetan *mantra* -- *om mani padme hum*, translated as "O the Jewel in the Lotus" (Ch'en 1964: 328).

and Left-hand Tantrists. The first part of ceremony is the performance of the sacrament -- the seven baptisms⁷² -- carried out by the Right-hand group for the spiritually ready. After the second part of the ceremony -- the sexo-yogic rituals -- has been performed by the Left-hand group, the ceremony is completed and salvation is achieved. In the Tantric view, the sexual union between male and female is seen as the symbol of universal creation and the accomplishment of salvation.⁷³

As to the fourth practice, *mandala*, it is a cosmic diagram which displays the Buddhist deities in their positions in the universe. The diagram in the form of a circle and square is usually set out as plan, or shown in terms of an architectural complex. It is the place where the devotee can contemplate and communicate with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In accordance with the doctrine of emptiness (*sûnyatâ*), all these deities manifested in the *mandala* are regarded as merely illusions. Once he becomes aware of the Buddha nature within him, the devotee discovers the esoteric secret of Tantrism.

In a *mandala*, the deities are manifested either in their visual form, as shown in Figure 2.21., or in Sanskrit letters, as shown in Figure 2.22. Basically, there are two kinds of *mandala* in use, that is, the Womb-world mandala (Garbha-kosa-mandala) and the Diamond-world mandala (Vajra-dhâtu-mandala). The difference between these two *mandalas* lies in the central zone of the *mandala* where the area is encircled by the lotus petal, or decorated with the thunderbolt (Vajra) in the perimeter, as shown in Figure 2.23.

⁷² The seven baptisms, according to Ch'en (1964: 330), consists of "baptism by water, the donning of a crown or diadem, the placing of the sacred band on the shoulder, the taking of the vows, and the receiving of a secret name, and the bell and thunderbolt which the neophyte would not touch until now".

⁷³ The Tantrists holds that *nirvâna* resides in the female organ; the union with the consort results in salvation. This sexo-yogic practices, which ran counter to Confucian moral tenets, never gained any headway on Chinese soil. When Buddhism spread to Japan during the tenth century, a new sect called the Tachikawa sect was founded by a Japanese monk named Nin-kan (A.D. 1057-1123) which preached sexual union as the means of attaining Buddhahood (Ch'en 1964: 334).

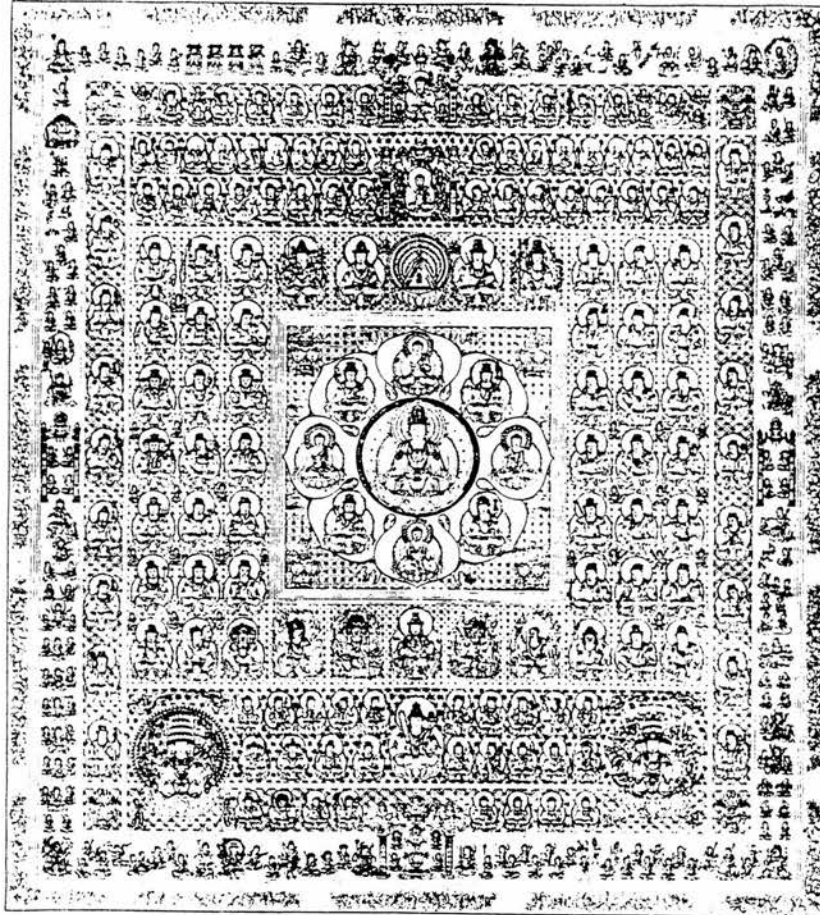


Figure 2.21. The Womb World Mandala in pictorial form (Snodgrass 1985: 199)

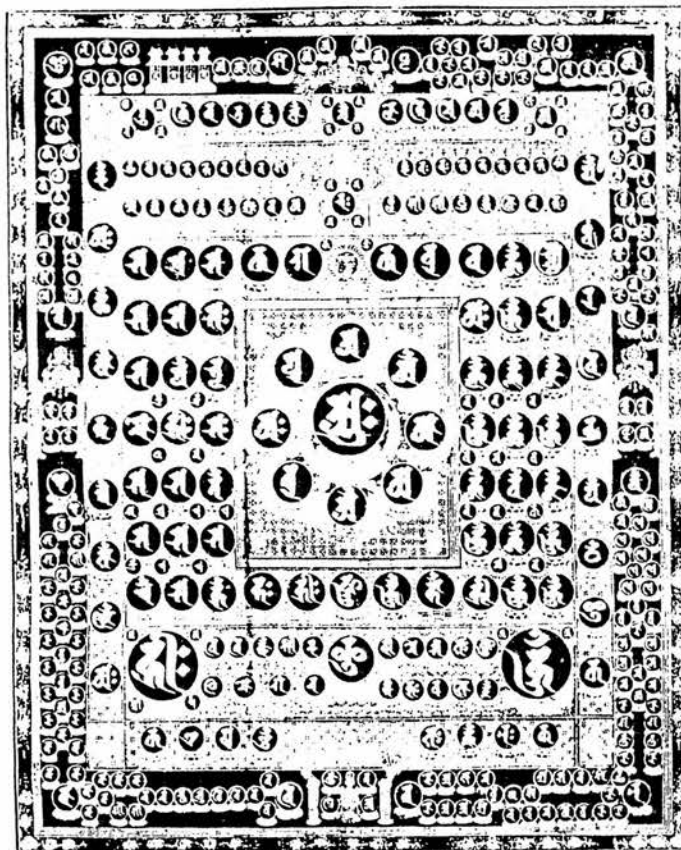
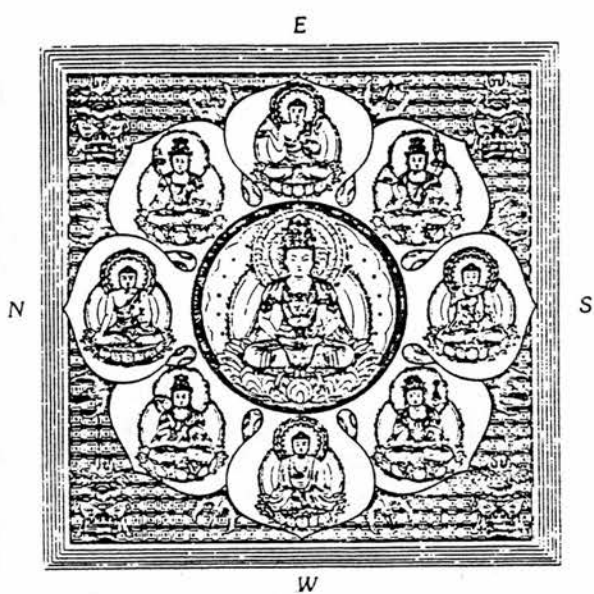
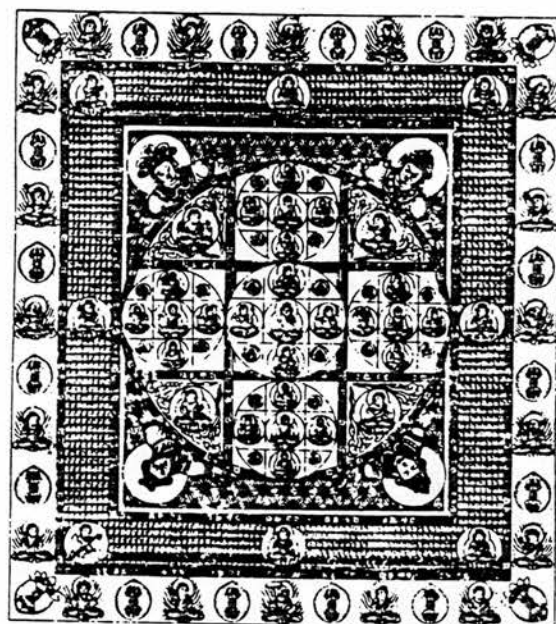


Figure 2.22. The Womb World Mandala in Sanskrit script (Coomaraswamy 1979, fig. 32)



(Womb World Mandala)



(Diamond World Mandala)

Figure 2.23. The difference between the Diamond World and Womb World Mandalas (Snodgrass 1985: 215)

In sum, the Tantric school introduces to its devotee the way to attain immediate salvation, this way being the performance of the magic formulae -- *mudrâs*, *mantras*, *abhishekas* and *mandalas* -- to invoke gods. The Tantrists believe that sutra knowledge is useless in achieving salvation, unless transformed into action and experience. Of these four practices, the first three involve the physical actions of the body -- hand formations, uttering the sound from the mouth, and performing the sexo-yogic ceremony. The intention of them is to unveil the exoteric secret of Tantrism. The fourth one -- the cosmic diagram of the Buddhist pantheon -- belongs to the esoteric spiritual experience between the devotee and the Buddhist deities.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARCHITECTURAL MANIFESTATION AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Buddhism was disseminated to China along the Central Asiatic highway known as the Silk Road. Following this road from Indian Gandhâra and Kashmir, the missionaries crossed Central Asia, arriving at Tun-huang (敦煌), a north-western frontier city of China, and from there, they entered Chinese Han dynasty territory. Evidence of the arrival of Buddhism and the erection of early Chinese Buddhist temples in the first century of the Christian era exists in many Chinese historical documents as well as in Buddhist texts, such as *Hou Han shu* (後漢書), *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* (洛陽伽藍記). As far as temple architecture is concerned, when the Indian Buddhist monuments were introduced into China, they became imbued with some of the design principles of the Chinese traditional house and palace, and the result was the Chinese Buddhist temple. In its architectural manifestation, the Chinese Buddhist temple synthesised both origins and developed in course of time into a variety of architectural patterns.

Generally speaking, the Chinese Buddhist temple can be categorised into three building types -- the cave, pagoda, and pavilion temple -- the concept and form of which are believed to originate in turn from the Indian cave temple (*chaitya-griha*), the Indian *stûpa* and early Chinese multi-storey buildings, and traditional Chinese architecture. Following the building principle of these origins, the general scheme of the cave temple consists of one square chamber, or two adjoining rooms separated by a square central column, inside a cave; that of the pagoda temple consists of a pagoda

in the centre as the major building surrounded by temple halls; and that of the pavilion temple consists of a number of halls and courtyards grouped along one central axis, or other subsidiary axes.

In the matter of spatial organisation as well as in the forms of individual buildings, there is clear evidence of cultural amalgamation. For instance, of the five different types of Chinese pagoda, the multi-storeyed, the close-eaved and the single-storeyed pagodas strongly reflect features of the established Chinese archetype. The vase-shaped pagoda on the other hand is regarded as "the Tibetan version of the Indian *stûpa*" (Liang 1984: 154) that was sinicised; and the Diamond Throne Pagoda is considered as the Chinese version of the Indian Mahabodhi Temple at Boddhgaya.

Despite the multiplicity of architectural patterns which resulted from the amalgamation of different cultures and religious beliefs, there are religious functions and essential characteristics which all forms of Chinese Buddhist temple have in common. With regard to these two common features (the religious functions and essential characteristics), the Chinese Buddhist temple is regarded as a religious institution built to fulfil the doctrine of the Three Jewels of Buddhism -- the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. That is to say, the Buddhist temple as a whole is considered as a shrine for housing the "Buddha", preaching the "Dharma", and accommodating the "Sangha".

Moreover, in manifesting its features, the Chinese Buddhist temple inevitably adopts certain aspects of the established Chinese archetype which concerns architectural style more than religious import. In view of the aim of this thesis (the exploration of the symbolism of the Chinese Buddhist temple), the architectural characteristics we discuss here should be those which reveal religious doctrine and beliefs, that is, the "essential" characteristics of orientation, axuality, and form of

individual buildings, and the iconography of the temple. This should define the content of subsequent chapters.

3.2. THE ROUTE OF THE SPREAD TO CHINA AND THE EARLY CHINESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Propelled by the third emperor of the Indian Mauryan Dynasty Asoka who held sway from 274 to 236 B.C., Buddhism, after nearly two centuries' propagation in the Ganges valley, started to spread in the 3rd century B.C. to other regions and eventually to neighbouring countries.⁷⁴ Along the valley in both directions, the religion first disseminated in the north-western (Gandhâra and Kashmir) and south-eastern regions of India; and from there, to the neighbouring countries -- Ceylon in the south, Pakistan in the west, Parthia, Sogdia, Khotan and Kucha in the east, and China, Korea and Japan in the Far East.

In transmitting Buddhism to China, the overland route that the Buddhist missionaries habitually took was the Silk Road, the great highway connecting Indian and Chinese north-western regions that had been travelled by merchants and diplomatic envoys for over a century before them, as shown in Figure 3.1. Following this road from Gandhâra and Kashmir, the missionaries crossed the Hindukush Mountains (the Karakorum Highway) and arrived at Kashgar, which, situated as it was at the end of a treacherous series of mountain passes, became something of a travellers' haven: numerous Buddhist monasteries were established there. On leaving Kashgar, the route split into two -- the northern route circumnavigated the northern border of the Tarim Basin; the southern one, the southern boundary. The southern

⁷⁴ The king Asoka dispatched missionaries to all the countries neighbouring his own to preach the Buddhist teachings. The current position of Buddhism as one of the great religions of the world is largely due to the efforts of Asoka.

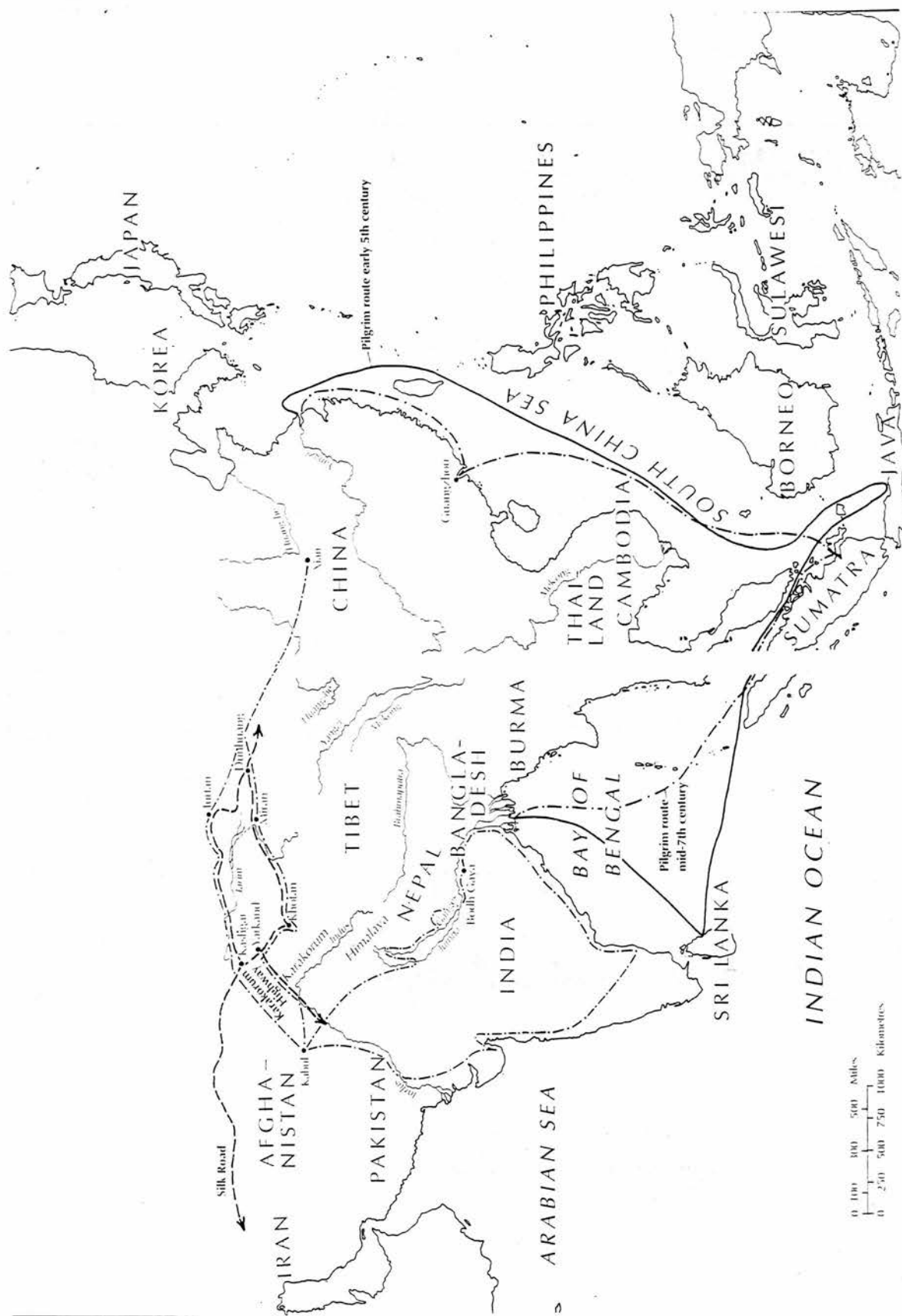


Figure 3.1. Map of the Buddhist world (Fisher 1993: 204-5).

route linked a series of oasis centres including Khotan; the northern alternative passed through Kucha, Karashar and Turfan. These small desert cities in Central Asia played a major role. Most early Buddhist scriptures were translated here (Fisher 1993: 86). Moreover, while the majority of Buddhist temples and sutras were destroyed during the period of the persecution of Buddhists in China,⁷⁵ the shrines in this area survived and provide important examples of Buddhist art and architecture.

Eventually, the missionaries met at Tun-huang (敦煌), a north-western city of China; through there, they entered the territory of Han dynasty China. Not surprisingly, Tun-huang became an important Buddhist centre for China. Cave temples were built in the adjacent mountains and the Indian Buddhist literatures were translated here into Chinese. The importance of the Silk Road as a conduit for ideas and art forms increased up until the era of Han imperial expansion, when the flood of Buddhism into China reached its height.

Gradually, when the Chinese government lost its control of Central Asia, the travellers' route was shifted from the land to the sea. Between India and China, there were two sea routes used, both across the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. Of these two, one sea route started from the Indian Ganges via Sri Lanka to the Chinese River Yangtze (揚子) in east China, and was employed by missionaries and pilgrimages during the early 5th century; the other, from the Cauvery river to Kuangtung (廣東) in south China, was used during the mid-7th century. For example, the Chinese monk I-ching (義淨) took the latter sea route to travel between China and India (A.D. 671-695).

⁷⁵ There were altogether four times in Chinese history when Buddhists were persecuted.

Once in China itself, Buddhism took root in scattered centres throughout the empire. The geographical distribution of these Buddhist centres testifies to the fact that the route of the spread moved along the main routes of internal trade and communication. Here, the northwestern trading centre of Tun-huang figures early as a Buddhist centre, and there is evidence of early communities in Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, in southern Shangtung (山東) and Anhui (安徽), in the lower Yangtze valley, and in the area around modern Wu-ch'ang (武昌). On the far southeast coast, Indian traders brought Buddhism to the Chinese outpost of Chiao-chou (蛟州).

As far as literary reference to the early spread is concerned, there are several legends regarding the first arrival of Buddhist beliefs in China from India via Central Asia, but no document reliable enough to establish the actual date. Nevertheless, Buddhism is believed to have made a partial penetration of China during the first century A.D., around the time that the Eastern Han (東漢) empire was establishing itself (A.D.25-220). It is thought that the emperors encouraged the dissemination of the new religion.

The first literary reference to the presence of Buddhism in China, and also the first incontrovertible evidence that it had arrived, is to be found in the work of a Han poet-official, Chang Heng (張衡, A.D. 78-139). In his famous poem *Hsi-ching fu* (西京賦, "Rhyme-prose on the Western Capital"), he describes the charm of some dancing girls, performing during an imperial celebration:

"Kicking off their vermilion slippers among the trays and flagons, they flapped their long flowing sleeves. Their handsome faces, their sumptuous clothes, were radiant with beauty. With their lovely eyes they cast bewitching glances upon the company. One look at them would make one surrender a city. Even if one were as sternly upright as old Liu Hsia-hui [柳下惠] or a Buddhist *sramana*,⁷⁶ one could not

⁷⁶ *Sramana* here means Buddhist monk; and Liu Hsia-hui was a saintly figure of more ancient times. The critical point here is the first appearance of the word -- *sramana* -- in Chinese literature.

but be captivated." (*Wen-hsüan* 文選 2. 59-60; see Arthur F. Wright 1959: 21)

From these lines, Wright surmises that "Buddhist monks were an accepted part of the life of Ch'ang-an (長安), well enough known for their ascetic lives to figure in a poet's imagery." (Wright 1959: 21-2)

Apart from this, of the early legends which relate specifically to Buddhist architecture, the account of the dream of the Emperor Ming (明帝) which features in many Chinese historical documents,⁷⁷ seems to be the most famous and popular one. The story goes that one night in A.D. 61 the Emperor Ming dreamed that a huge golden man, his head surrounded by a radiant light, came flying down from heaven to the palace. Next morning, the Emperor asked his courtiers who this golden flying man could have been. One of his ministers, Fu Yi (傅毅), replied that he had heard of a saint in a far-western country called Buddha who was capable of flying and whose body could naturally radiate golden light (Ch'en 1964: 29).

According to the "Shih Lao chih" (釋老志) of *Wei-shu* (魏書, A.D. 554) (Li Yün-ho 1978: 106-7), the Emperor, then dispatched a deputation westward to seek more information about this mysterious deity and his teachings. After several years' pilgrimage, the deputation finally succeeded in getting possession of many Buddhist relics and scriptures⁷⁸ and proceeded on the homeward journey (Figure 3.2.). They also brought with them two Indian monks: Kasyapa Matanga and Gobharana. When they reached the Chinese capital city, Lo-yang (洛陽), a Buddhist temple was built to accommodate the sacred relics and scriptures; and paintings of pagodas, which were constructed in Indian styles and ranged from one, to three, five, seven and nine floors,

⁷⁷ Though there are still some arguments as to the authenticity of this legend, it is recorded in many Chinese historical documents as well as Buddhist texts such as *Hou Han shu*, *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* etc.

⁷⁸ The scripture in question is called "*The Sutra in Forty-two Sections*" which was the first Buddhist scripture to be brought into China.

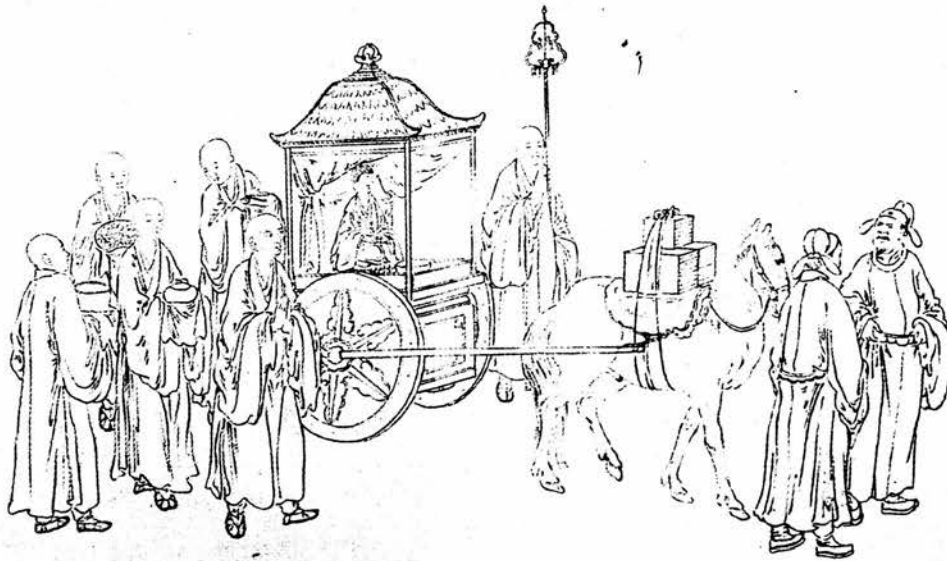


Figure 3.2. The first Chinese envoys to India
(Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 196).

decorated the walls all over the temple (Hsieh K'e 1987: 10). The temple was situated just outside Hsi-yung-men (西 雍 門, the "Western Gate") of the city, and because the relics and scriptures had been carried by a team of white horses, it was named Pai-ma-ssû (白 馬 寺, or the "White Horse Temple") (Reichelt 1934: 10).

This is the earliest occurrence of the word *ssû* as meaning "a Buddhist temple".⁷⁹ In etymology, the word *ssû* (寺) refers to a government department in the ancient bureaucracy. According to Li (1978: 106), the term may derive from the homonym, *shih* (仕), which means the officials who serve the emperor, because it was the departments they established that were eventually entitled *ssû*. Nevertheless, why the name should come to be used to denote a Buddhist temple after having been used for a governmental department remains a matter for discussion. Moreover, as recorded in *Hsü wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao* (續 文 獻 通 考) (Li 1978: 106), the group of white horses, when they arrived at Lo-yang and carried the Buddhist relics and literature, was stabled in an official building called Hung-lu-ssû (鴻 臚 寺) -- a department of government mainly dealing with foreign affairs. In this connection, the first temple Hung-lu-ssû was originally an official building and was merely redecorated when assigned its new function. Thus, the standard term for a Buddhist temple or monastery "*ssû*", which was used all over China, is simply the generic name given to certain governmental offices under the Han, and may have been adopted either because of a similarity of form or because the first organised temples were instigated by the state.

Besides the legend of the Emperor Ming's dream, there are other tales referring to the erection of the earliest Chinese Buddhist temples. For instance, as indicated in the *Hou Han shu* (後 漢 書), almost at the same period that the Pai-ma-ssû was established, Liu Ying (劉 英), the king of Ch'u (楚), converted to Buddhism and

⁷⁹ According to Erik Zürcher (1959: 39), that fact that *ssû* referred to a Buddhist temple is to be found in the anonymous colophon to *Pan-chou san-mei ching*, *Pratyutpana-buddha-sammukhâvasthita samâdhi sūtra* (TSD 13. 417).

started to build *jen-ts'û* (仁 祠),⁸⁰ i.e. a Buddhist temple, for the worship of his god (cf. Liu Laurence G. 1989: 55). In original Chinese terms, the generic word for a place or a building where the ritual of worshipping heaven and the ancestors took place was *ts'û* (祠). Over the millennia, the word *ts'û* became synonymous with traditional Chinese ceremonial architecture. It seems therefore appropriate to use it to refer to a religious architecture such as that of the Chinese Buddhist temple. However, in contrast to the word *ssû*, *ts'û* seems to have survived only during the early period of the spread of Buddhism into China. That is to say, the term was current only when the form of the Chinese Buddhist temple was still undetermined, and, in fact difficult to distinguish clearly from traditional Chinese ritual architecture (For discussions of traditional Chinese ritual architecture, see above 2.3.1.). Judging from the two Buddhist temples that have been mentioned as having been erected by royalty, we may surmise that, whatever name they chose to call their buildings, during this early period Buddhism was adopted almost exclusively by royal families and the nobility .

As far as the architectural form of the early temple is concerned, Buddhist historians claim that several monasteries were founded during this early period of slow penetration, but proof is lacking. The only such case to be officially recorded⁸¹ is that of a Han local official, Chai Jung (柴 融), who, in A.D. 191, built a temple in the northern Kiangsu (江 蘇). Within the precinct of this temple, he erected a shrine within which a human figure cast in bronze was gilded and clad in brocade. There was also a multi-storey pagoda the roof of which was adorned with nine golden disks, and had many pavilions organised around it. The temple was on such a scale that the covered galleries could accommodate more than three thousand people. On the Buddha's birthday, free meals were given and tens of thousands of people attended. This is the

⁸⁰ Here *ts'û*, and not *ssû*, is adopted as the name of the Buddhist temple.

⁸¹ The account has been recorded in the "Liu-yu ch'üan" of *San-kuo chih* and the "T'ao-ch'ien ch'üan" of *Hou Han shu* (see Liu 1986: 27).

first time we hear of Buddhist worship being combined with a social charity programme.

To sum up, Indian Buddhism was disseminated to China in the first century of the Christian era via the Silk Road, the Central Asiatic Highway, that had been travelled by merchants and diplomatic envoys for centuries. Following the Silk Road, numerous Buddhist temples which were built in the small desert cities in the Central Asia witnessed the spread of the religion.

In China, the first official Buddhist temple was built under the instruction of the Han Emperor Ming in ca. A.D. 67 in Lo-yang. It was called *Pai-ma-ssû*, or the "White Horse Temple", after the white horses who originally carried the Buddhist scriptures to the town. Almost at the same period, Liu Ying, the king of Ch'u, also built a Buddhist temple, named *jen-ts'û*. In this connection, both the words *ssû* and *ts'û* were employed as Chinese terms for the Buddhist temple, a religious building which had not been seen on Chinese soil before. Since then, the former became the official name of the Chinese Buddhist temple; the latter, only survived during this early stage of the spread, owing to its intermingling with the spread of traditional Chinese ritual building.

Another instance of the early Buddhist temple, which was also officially recorded, was built by a Han local official, named Chai Jung, in A.D. 191 in modern Kiangsu province. Its building style, which is well described in historical documents, displays characteristics of both the Indian Buddhist temple and traditional Chinese architecture. It is possible to see in the sketchy record of this Buddhist temple the pattern of adaptation, which was to be more fully developed in the following centuries.

3.3. THE ARCHITECTURAL PATTERNS

As we are well aware, no Buddhist monuments built in China before the middle of the fourth century have survived into the twentieth century.⁸² However, judging from the extant Buddhist temples dated from the fifth century onwards, the fusion of Indian architectural forms with certain features of Chinese architecture was soon completed, and the Chinese Buddhist temple established its own building style on its own soil. Generally speaking, most of the literature that has been published categorises the architectural form of the Chinese Buddhist temple into three patterns, namely the cave temple, the pagoda temple, and the pavilion temple. An example of this classification appears in Liu's *Chinese architecture* (1989: 56). Similarly, the book, *A pictorial history of Chinese architecture*, written by Liang Ssû-ch'êng in 1984, explores the history of Chinese architecture in terms of these three patterns. Apart from these, there are many others that use the same classification.

3.3.1. The cave temple

The cave temple is a shrine, which was either hewn into the rock face or set inside natural caves, as shown in Figure 3.3. It is a form of Buddhist shrine, which originated in India in the 2nd century B.C., the *chaitya-griha*, and was common there long before Buddhism was introduced to China.⁸³ In China, the employment of caves for architectural purpose was not, in fact, uncommon. For instance, in the northern

⁸² The earliest extant Buddhist monuments are the Tun-huang cave temples in Kansu province, dug out during the fourth century. Next are the Yün-kang caves of Shansi province, built between the fourth and fifth centuries.

⁸³ Generally speaking, the Buddhist monuments in India, as Debala Mitra (1971: 21-56) points out, can be grouped into four architectural forms, namely *stûpa*, *chaitya-griha*, monastery and temple. The *stûpa* is a memorial to a great spiritual teacher. The *caitya* -- a form of *stûpa* -- is an object of worship in a rock-cut cave temple (cave temples can sometimes be called *chaitya-griha*). Whereas the original *stûpas* were in the open air, *chaitya-grihas* allowed devotees to worship within the new *stûpas*, which were also hewn from rock, without being disturbed by the weather.

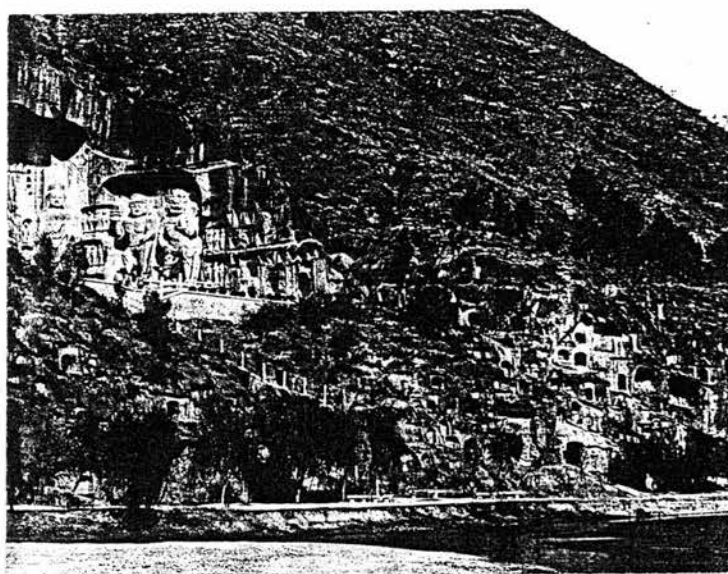


Figure 3.3. Plan, Lung-men cave temples (Liu 1989: 74).

areas around the River Amur, holes were anciently dug into the ground (Nuttgens 1983: 56), but in this case were used as dwelling places rather than shrines.

When Buddhism did arrive in China via the Silk Road, and the first Buddhist centre was established in the western settlement of Tun-huang, natural caves were further hollowed out into temples in this area. Apart from religious reasons, the temple was set in these secluded places because of geographical and geological considerations: most of these caves are situated at oases or crossroads along the Silk Road where monks and merchants came to rest. Furthermore, almost all of these caves face a valley or, in most cases, a river: the cliffs at such sites are usually perpendicular and, as such, easier to hollow out and making their construction easier than building a pavilion temple. The practice of excavating caves as Buddhist shrines became prevalent in China after the fourth century, and reached the height of its popularity in the Northern and Southern, Sui and T'ang dynasties, between the middle of the fifth century and the beginning of the tenth century.

The earliest cave temples are the Mo-kao (莫 高) caves at Tun-huang in Kansu (甘 肅) province, which are commonly called the "One Thousand Buddha Caves". They were hollowed out during the fourth century. Next are the Yün-kang (雲 岡) caves, the so-called Cloud Hill Caves, in the Shansi (山 西) province, built between the fourth and fifth centuries. The major achievement of Tun-huang is its use of lively frescoes to depict Buddhist ideas, still indistinguishable in style from those of ancient India.⁸⁴ Similarly, the sculptures and carvings of Yün-kang, its Buddhist images, decorations and architectural details, all represent the cultural intermingling that was taking place there between China and India.⁸⁵ These two sets of Buddhist caves, taken

⁸⁴ The frescoes mainly preached the concepts of Buddhism such as *karma*, the performance of good deeds, how to reach a peaceful *nirvâna* state, and how to get into the Western Paradise etc.

⁸⁵ The importance of Yün-kang lies in the fact that not only are there carved Buddhist sculptures there, but also a large number of Chinese architectural features and Indian decorative details of the period, which help understanding of the architectural and sculptural art of the fifth century. The

as a whole, rank amongst the greatest monuments of Chinese religious art, and mark a crucial moment in the history of Chinese art per se.

Apart from these most famous cave temples, other well-known ones were also built along the route of the Buddhist spread into North China, such as the T'ien-lung-shan (天龍山) caves, in the Shansi province, and the Lung-men (龍門) caves, in Honan (河南) province.⁸⁶ Geographically, the hewing out of cave temples from rocky cliffs was practised in the north until the middle of the T'ang dynasty, and thereafter carried on in the southwest, notably in Szechwan (四川) province, until the Ming (明) dynasty. Ta-chih (大指) caves are typical examples of this later kind.⁸⁷

As far as the architectural form is concerned, most of the caves are distinguished by their square floor plans;⁸⁸ some have just one square chamber within the cave, the others consist of two adjoining rooms, divided by a square central column. For the one-room cave, niches for statues of the Buddha are placed against the walls, as shown in Figure 3.4. For the two-room one, niches were carved on some of the central columns, as shown in Figure 3.5., whilst others are shaped into Buddhist pagodas, as shown in Figure 3.6. Porticos, which were either made of wood or carved from stone, were added to the entrances after the fifth century to protect the caves, as shown in Figure 3.7.

architectural treatment of the caves is almost exclusively Chinese. The only indication of foreign influence is the Greco-Buddhist motifs in the ornamentation which have enriched and become a part of the Chinese decorative vocabulary.

⁸⁶ The construction of T'ien-lung-shan caves began during the Northern Ch'i dynasty, A.D. 550-577, and continued through the Sui and T'ang dynasties (A.D. 581-906); that of the Lung-men caves started during the Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386-534), and carried on until the T'ang dynasty.

⁸⁷ The Ta-chih caves began to be constructed in the middle of the T'ang dynasty, and construction continued through the Northern Sung and Southern Sung dynasties until the Ming dynasty.

⁸⁸ The floor plan of some early caves, such as Caves number 16 to 20 of the Yün-kang caves which were cut during the Northern Wei dynasty, is elliptical.

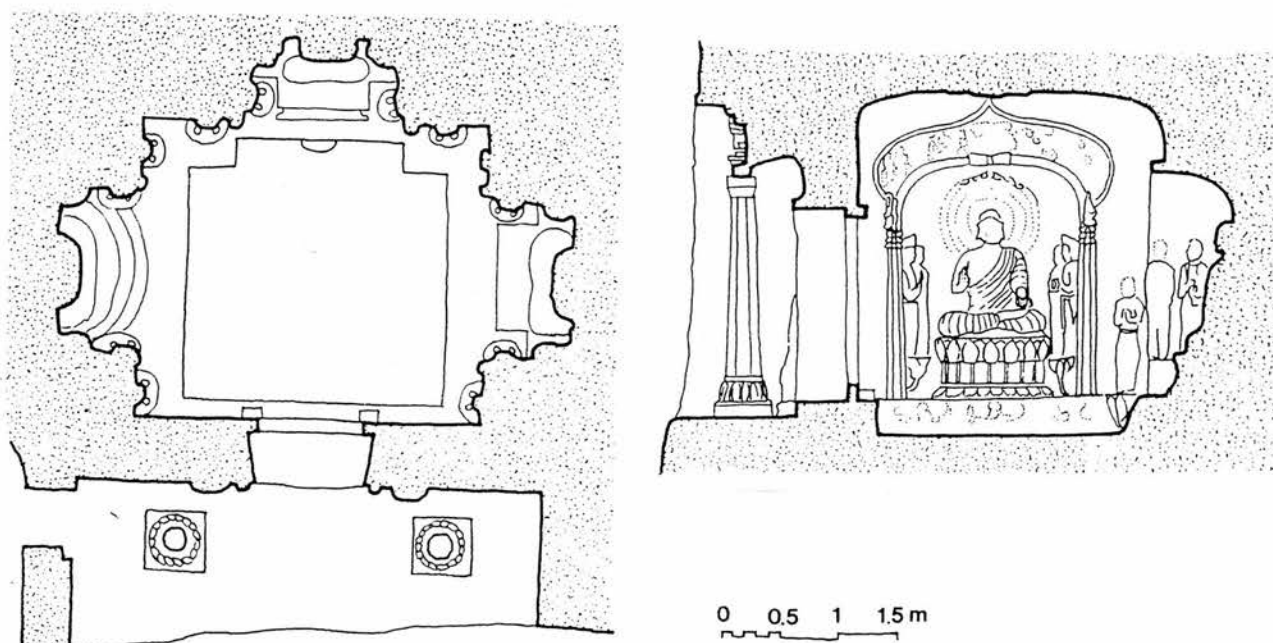


Figure 3.4. Plan and section of no. 16 cave, T'ien-lung-shan cave temple (Liu 1989: 82).

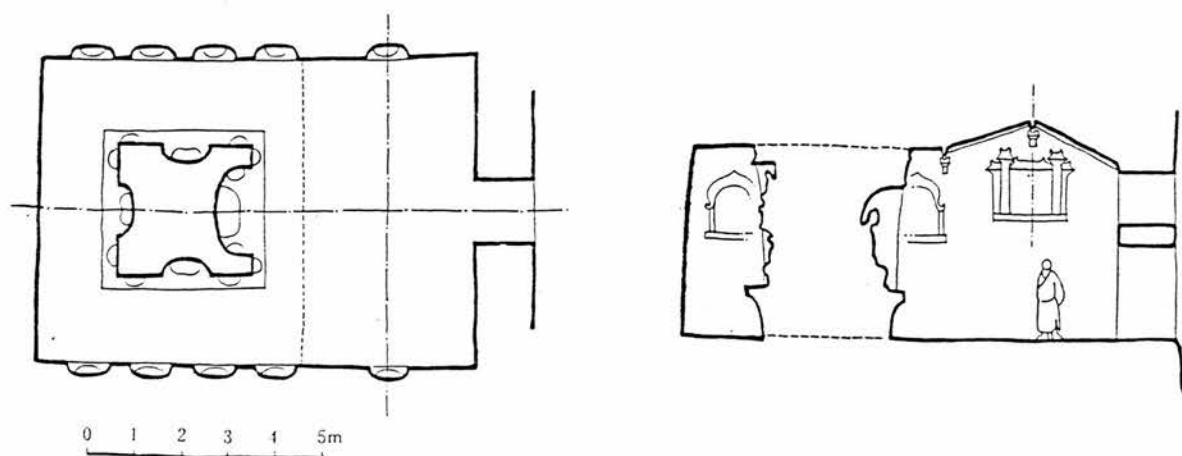


Figure 3.5. Plan and section of no. 254 cave, Tun-huang cave temple (Hsiao 1989: 37)

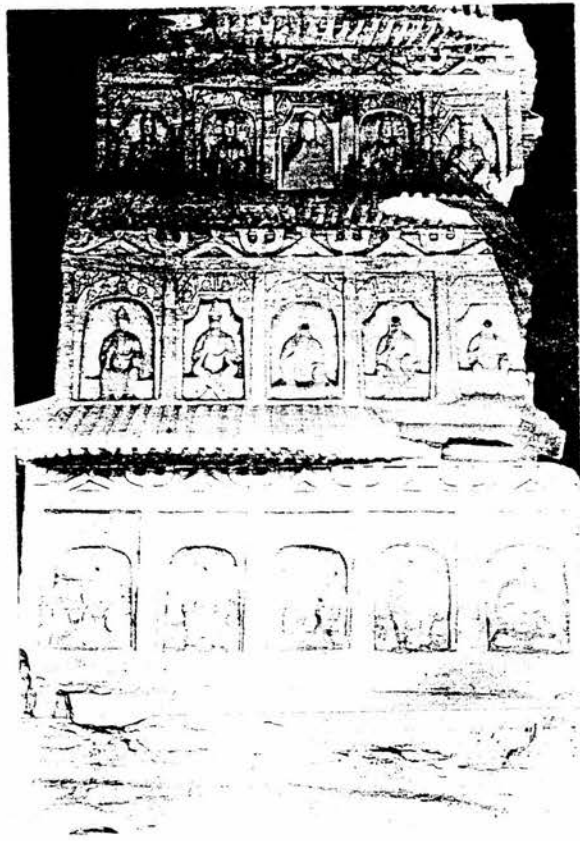


Figure 3.6. Central pillar of no. 39 cave, Yün-kang cave temple (Bussagli 1981: 58)

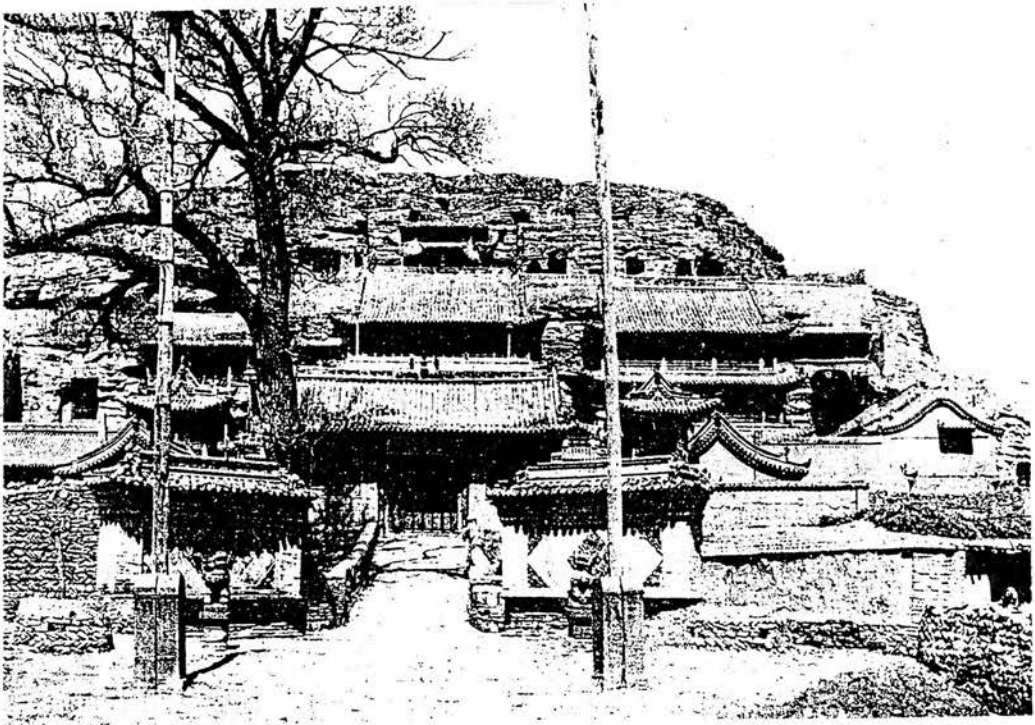


Figure 3.7. Portico, Yün-kang cave temple (Liang 1932-: IV, 3/4, 218, fig. 41)

In their decoration, the caves exhibit many designs taken from India, Persia and Greece. The walls and ceiling are fully covered with bas-reliefs, depicting for example *apsaras* (floating fairy), lotus, golden wing birds and so on, as shown in Figure 3.8.; like the sculptures, these are very elaborate both in style and motif. However, the actual architectural treatment of the caves which, in the shapes and the reliefs depicted on the walls, faithfully mimics wooden architecture, is an almost exclusively Chinese phenomenon, shown in Figure 3.9. Foreign influence, as Liang (1984: 31) points out, is limited to

"the idea of the cave temple itself and the Greco-Buddhist motifs in the ornaments such as the acanthus leaf, the egg-and-dart, the *swastika*, the garland, the bead, and others, which have enriched and become a part of the vocabulary of Chinese ornamental motifs."

To sum up, the cave temple, which served as the place of worship and spiritual cultivation, originated from the *chaitya-griha*, the Indian rock-cut temple. In China, the cave temples were first built near Tun-huang, the terminal of the Silk Road, in the Kansu province. In the course of time, the temple spread to Shansi province -- the Yün-kang and T'ien-lung-shan caves -- and Honan province -- the Lung-men cave -- in the north, and the Szechwan province -- Ta-chih cave -- in the south; and the practice of excavating caves as Buddhist shrines lasted for centuries.

In most cases, the cave temples were sited on the side cliffs of a river valley (cf. Figure 3.3.). In plan, most of the temples have one square chamber, or two adjoining rooms which were separated by a square central column. The decoration of the temple, which displays strongly the features of both alien Indian, Persian and Greek artistic motifs and native Chinese architectural style, reflects the struggle to merge a variety of cultures in one single building. The temple as a whole bears witness to the Chinese appreciation of foreign religion.

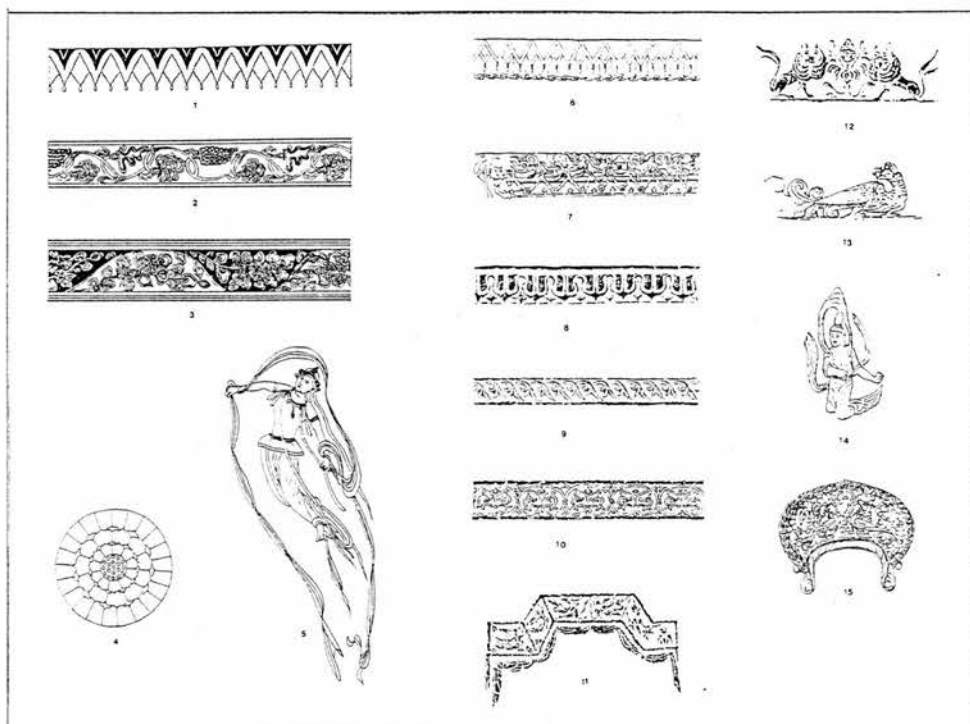


Figure 3.8. Ornamental motifs, Tun-huang cave temple (Liu 1989: 87)

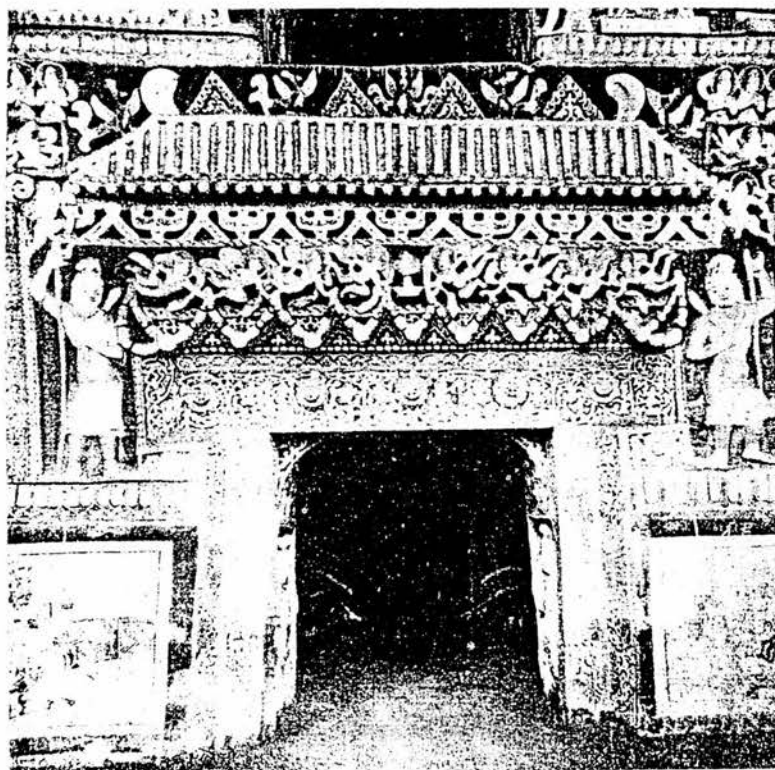


Figure 3.9. Architectural details, Tun-huang cave temple (Liang 1932-: IV, 3/4, 218, fig. 28)

3.3.2. The pagoda temple

The pagoda temple, which appeared at the time of the Eastern Han dynasty (A.D. 25-220), was the earliest kind of Buddhist temple in China. As indicated in "Shih-Lao chih" of *Wei-shu*, when Pai-ma-ssû, or the White Horses Temple, was built in Lo-yang in A.D. 68, paintings of pagodas were hung all over the temple; and according to *San-kuo chih* and *Hou Han shu*, a multi-storey pagoda, the roof of which was adorned with nine golden disks and had many pavilions organised around it, was built within the Chai Jung (翟 衡) temple in A.D. 191 in modern Kiangsu (江 蘇) province (see above 3.2.). Judging from the two early examples mentioned above, the early pagoda temple consisted of a tall, symbolic structure -- the pagoda itself, (*t'a* 塔 in Chinese) -- in the centre, as the major building, and surrounding temple halls.

In etymological terms, the Chinese word *t'a*, as Liu (1989: 56) points out, "is a new word put into use after the Buddhist Sutras were introduced to China and translated from the Sanskrit '*stûpa*' or [Sinhalese] '*dagoba*' and phonetic translation of '*topes*', [i.e. the dome *stûpa*]". In view of this, he surmises that "the concept and form of the Chinese Buddhist pagoda originated [from those of the Indian *stûpa*]". Indeed, the assumption can be justified by the similar religious function of these two Buddhist monuments -- the Indian *stûpas* were said to contain the Buddha's remains and were objects of commemoration and homage for his disciples; correspondingly, the Chinese pagodas marked the burial sites of Buddhist monks and were the focus for devotees who wished to pay their respects.

However, in terms of its outer appearance, the pagoda is very close to the traditional Han multi-storey building,⁸⁹ known as *lou-ke* (樓 閣). Evidence of the

⁸⁹ As Nuttgens (1983: 58) suggests, the multi-storey pagoda might evolve from two different styles of the Han multi-storey building -- the Han Chinese house which contained three floors and the watch- or water-towers. Both are found in a Han tomb.

multi-storey pagoda can be found in the carving of the stone columns -- which were sculpted in the form of multi-storey buildings -- in a Yün-kang cave (Cf. above Figure 3.6.). There are also numerous bas-reliefs depicting similar pagodas on the posts of a building, as shown in Figure 3.10. Owing to the lack of sufficient documents, it is very difficult to determine which is the true origin, but the fact that the Chinese pagoda has remained essentially an indigenous Chinese multi-storey tower, strongly indicates that the pagoda is an Indian structure (the *stûpa*) that has been sinocised. Figure 3.11. summaries the evolution of the Chinese pagoda from the Indian prototype and Chinese multi-storey watch tower.

In fact, apart from the multi-storeyed pagoda (*lou-ge-t'a* 樓閣塔), there are also four other types of Chinese pagoda, namely, the close-eaved pagoda (*mi-yen-t'a* 密檐塔), the single-storey pagoda (*tan-ts'eng-t'a* 單層塔), the vase-shaped pagoda (*p'ing-hsing-t'a* 瓶形塔), and the Diamond-Throne Pagoda (*chin-kang-pao-tso-t'a* 金剛寶座塔). In the following paragraphs, I shall briefly introduce their principal features.

First, the multi-storeyed pagoda is a combination of the Chinese storeyed building with the Indian *stûpa*. Most of the Chinese pagodas were of this kind. The first evidence of the *lou-ge-t'a* form, as mentioned above, is in the reliefs on the walls and the central column of Yün-kang caves. The pagodas depicted appear to have been carved out of stone, and details such as the engaged pilasters and the cantilevered tile roof show deference to the wooden construction. The storeys of pagodas are odd in number. The typical example of this kind is Ta-yen-t'a (大雁塔, the "Greater Wild Goose Pagoda") of Tz'u-en-ssû (慈恩寺) in Shansi (陝西) province, as shown in Figure 3.12. The seven-storey pagoda was erected at the request of monk Hsüan-tsang (玄奘) in A.D. 704, for the storage of a sutra he had brought back from India. Here, the pagoda building imitates the Chinese wooden structure, having round



Figure 3.10. Pagoda bas-reliefs depicted on the pillars, Yün-kang cave temple (Liu 1989: 79)

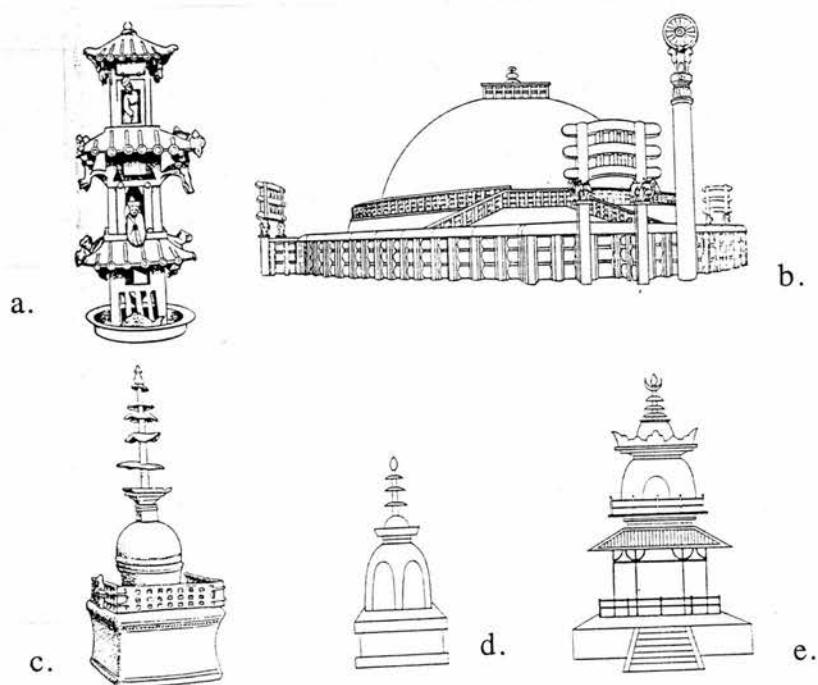


Figure 3.11. Evolution of the Chinese pagoda (Li 1978: 359)
a. Pottery model of a watchtower, Han dynasty (207 B.C. - A.D. 220);
b. The Great Stûpa at Sânci India (ca. 50 B.C.);
c. Reliquary *stûpa* at Gandhâra (ca. A.D. 200);
d.&e. Pagodas from frescoes at Tun-huang cave temple (ca. 5th century)

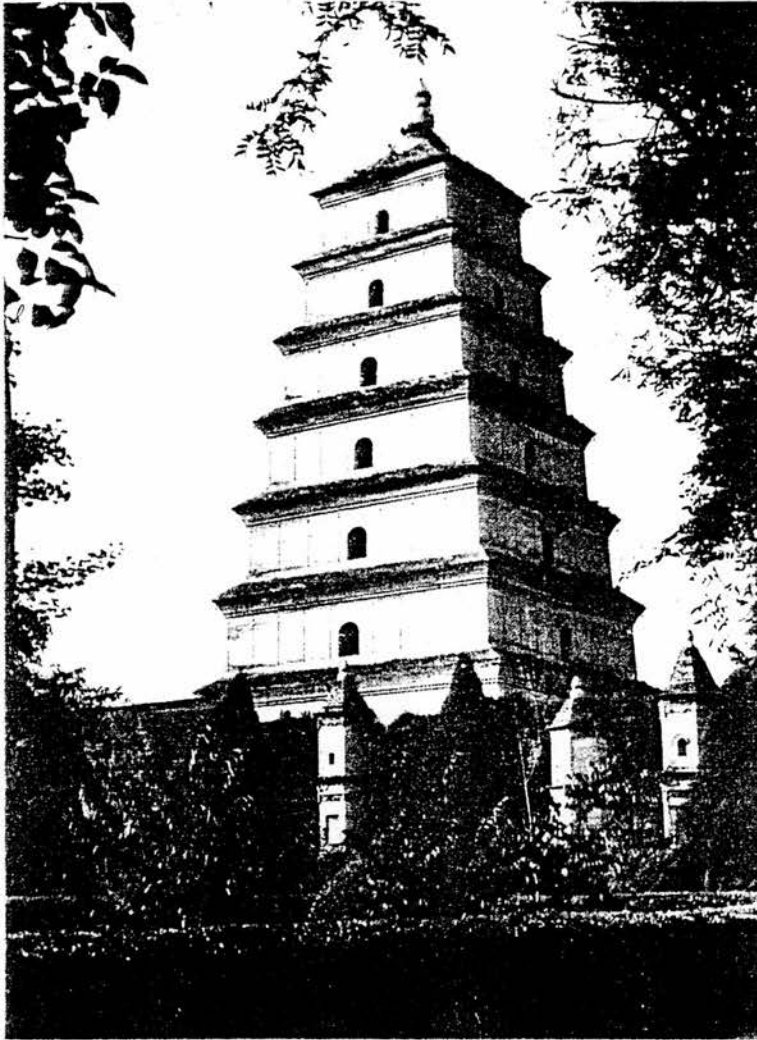


Figure 3.12. Ta-yen-t'a, the "Greater Wild Goose Pagoda", Tsu-en-ssû
(Liang: 1984: 131)

columns at every corner, a central beam, and consecutive sets of supporting systems. Looked at from the outside, the outline of the pagoda is tapered from bottom to top -- each storey scales down its height and floor area as the building structure goes up. Inside the pagoda, there is a staircase leading to the top. Stacks are placed near the outside walls.

Secondly, the close-eaved pagoda is a pagoda with many layers of eaves on its main body of building. Here, the eaves of the pagoda, which are piled one upon another, form the main feature of the pagoda. Because the eaves are so close to each other, the layers of the eaves, which are odd in number, do not indicate the division of the interior floors, as shown in Figure 3.13. In some cases, such high and well-ventilated pagodas were employed to house the sutras to ensure their preservation.

The earliest remaining example of the close-eaved pagoda is the oldest temple pagoda of Sung-yüeh (嵩 嶽) built in A.D. 520, in the Honan (河 南) province, as shown in Figure 3.14. The general scheme of the pagoda consists of high base on which is elevated a fifteen-eaved main body. On top of the multi-layered eaves, there is a stone *sha* (簋), or "finial", which is held by inverted lotus petals. It is beyond doubt that this tower was a precedent for other close-eaved pagodas in following dynasties. The typical instance of this kind is the Hsiao-yen (小 雁塔) pagoda of Chien-fu (荐 福) temple in Shansi (陕 西) province, as shown in Figure 3.15. The pagoda consists of fifteen eaves. Each part of the main building body between the eaves diminishes slightly in three dimensions, as the building structure rises. The whole outside contour forms a parabola shape.

The third type of pagoda, the single-storey pagoda was built mainly as a tomb for monks and nuns. In plan, the pagoda consists of one chamber, which is square shaped, octagonal, or even circular. Normally, there is only one doorway leading to

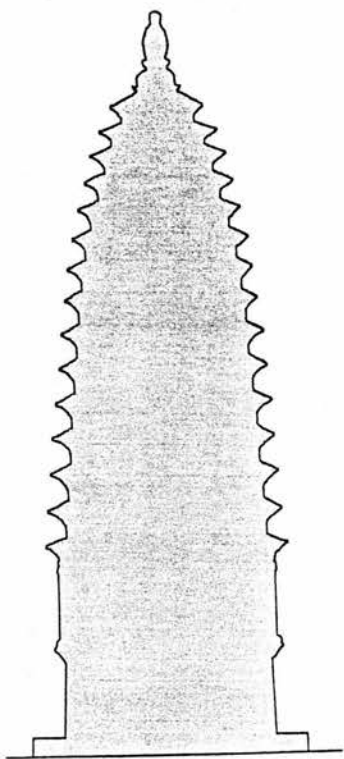


Figure 3.13. Silhouette of the Sung-yüeh temple pagoda
(Hsieh 1987: 26)



Figure 3.14. Sung-yüeh temple pagoda,
Honan province
(Bussagli 1981: 57)

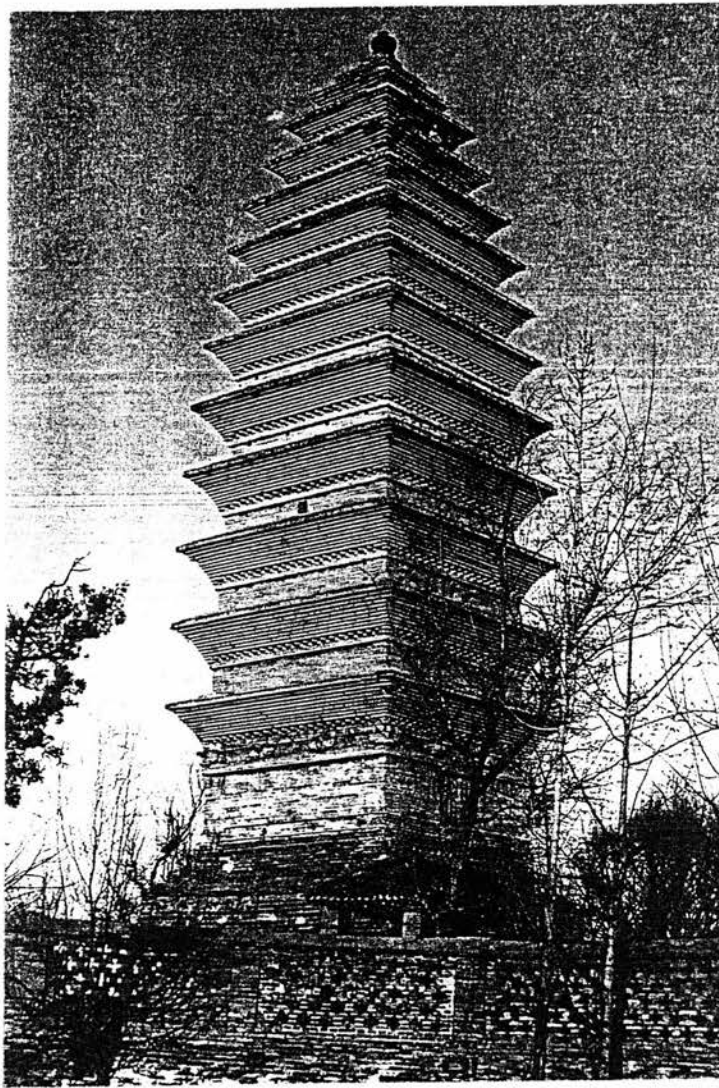


Figure 3.15. Hsiao-yen-t'a, the "Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda", Chien-fu-ssû (Li: 1986: 135)

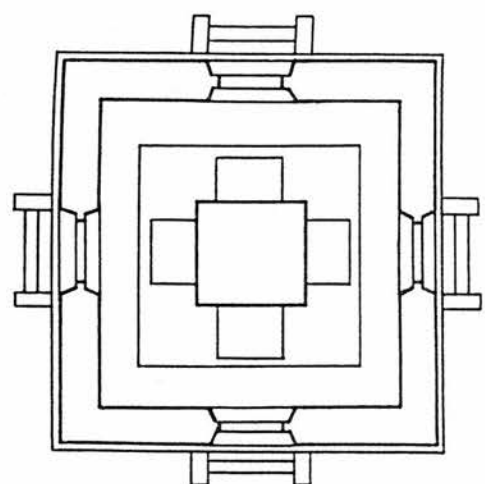


Figure 3.16. Ssû-men-t'a, Shen-t'ung-ssû (Hsieh 1987: 17)

the chamber. In outer appearance, the pagoda is a single storey building with one to three levels of eaves, the top of which is crowned with a finial. On average, the building is between three to four metres high. The earliest of these single-storey pagodas still standing is Ssû-men-t'a (四門塔) at Shen-t'ung-ssû (神通寺), in Shantung (山東) province, built in A.D.544, as shown in Figure 3.16. In plan, the only chamber inside the pagoda is square. In outer appearance, the pagoda has one layer of eaves, and is crowned by a finial. The building has an arched doorway in each of the four sides, which is unique.

The typical example of the many one-cell tomb pagodas is the tomb pagoda of master Ching-tsang (淨藏) in Hui-shan-ssû (會善寺), in Honan province, built in A.D.746, as shown in Figure 3.17. The pagoda, whose plan is octagonal, is a single-storey building with three layers of eaves and one doorway leading to the inner chamber. A similar instance of this kind is the tomb pagoda of master Fan-chou (汎舟) in Shansi (山西) province, in A.D. 822, as shown in Figure 3.18. The pagoda is also a single-storey, one-cell building with three layers of eaves. The only difference between these two is in plan -- the former is octagonal, the latter circular.

The fourth pagoda type, the vase-shaped pagoda, as Liang (1984: 154) points out, is "the Tibetan version of the Indian *stûpa*". This type of pagoda became popular only with the arrival of the Mongol emperors of the Yüan (元) dynasty, who adopted Tibetan Lama Buddhism as their religion. Many pagodas of this kind were built in Tibet, Tsinghai (青海) province and in Peking (北京) during the Yüan era. Of these, the White Pagoda in the temple of Miao-ying (妙應) in Peking was a prototype of this kind, built in A.D. 1271 with the guidance of the Nepalese craftsman Anige, as shown in Figure 3.19. Looked at from the outside, the pagoda consists of a platform, upon which is a two-tiered tall base; on top of the base, huge lotus petals support a jar-like "belly" with a "neck", which is called the Thirteen Heavens, and an umbrella-like disc

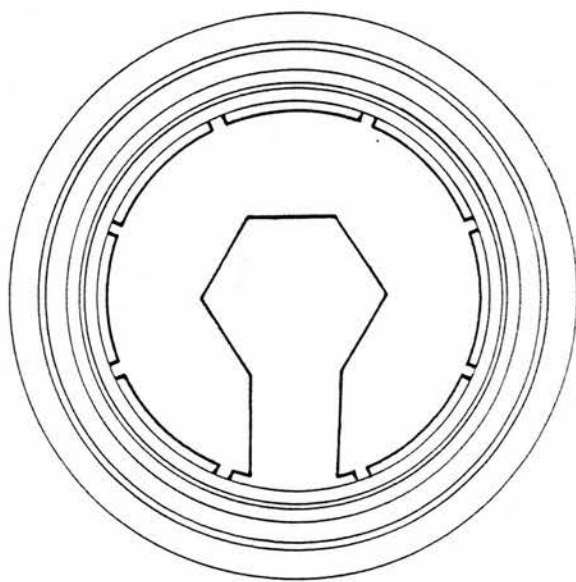


Figure 3.18. Tomb pagoda of master Fan-chou, Shansi province (Hsieh 1987: 17)

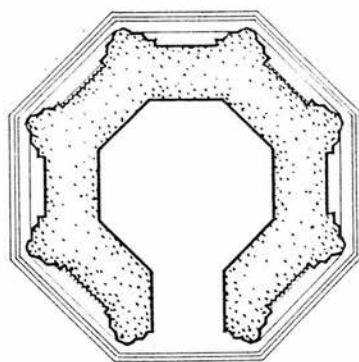


Figure 3.17. Tomb pagoda of master Ching-tsang, Hui-shan-ssû (Liang 1984: 129)

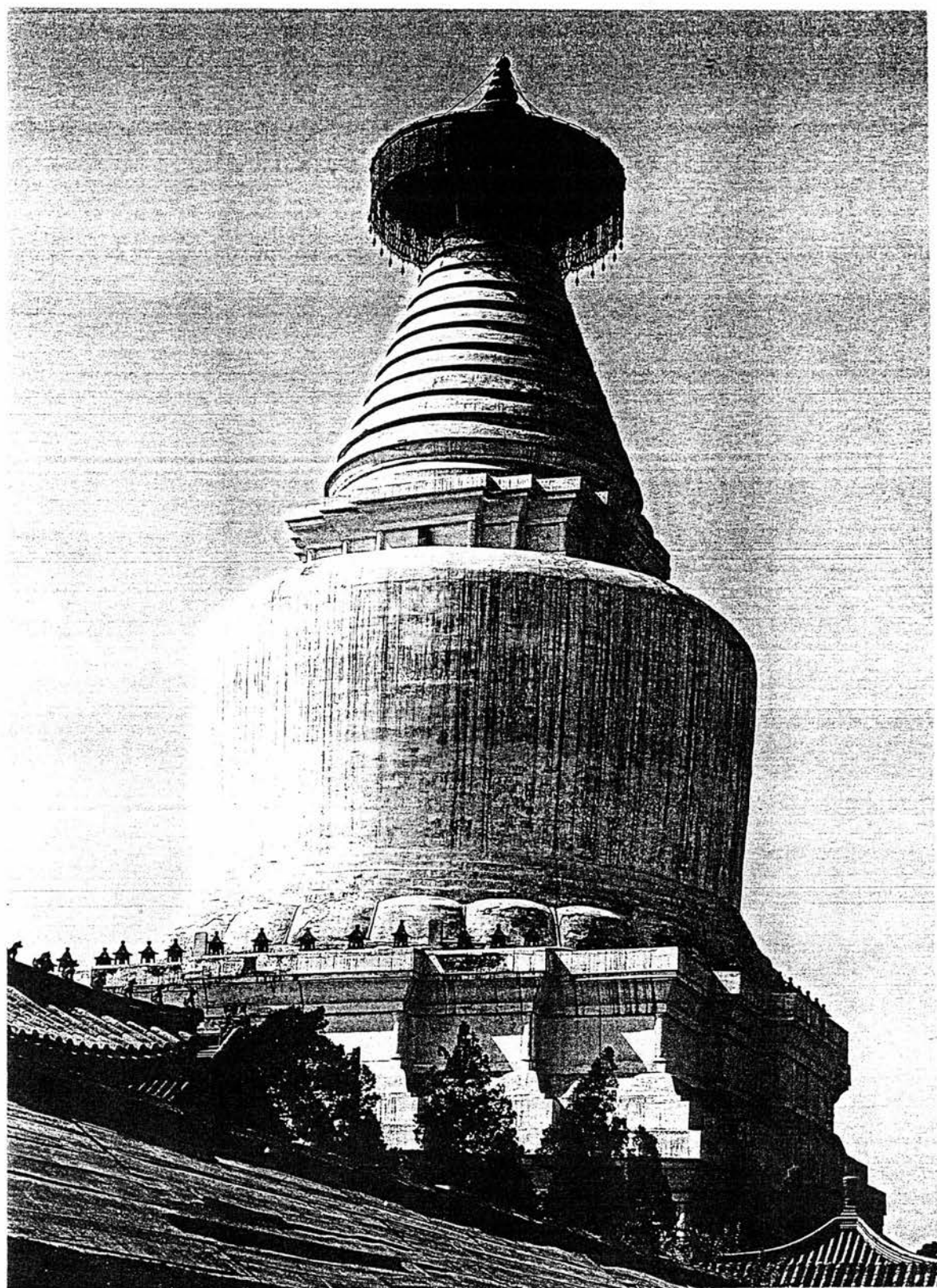


Figure 3.19. Miaoying temple pagoda, Peking (Hsieh 1987: 140)

crowns the whole. The pagoda of this kind is usually stuccoed with white lime. That's why the vase-shaped pagoda was generally known as the "White Pagoda".

After the Yüan dynasty, this type of pagoda continued to be built on Chinese soil. Two excellent instances of it are Ta-t'a-yüan (大塔院) temple pagoda, or "Big Pagoda Courtyard Temple Pagoda", at Wu-t'ai-shan (五台山), in Shansi Province, built in A.D. 1577, and the White Pagoda of Yung-an-ssû (永安寺), built in A.D. 1651, in Pei-hai (北海), Peking. In terms of building structure, these three instances, though differing greatly in size, are almost identical in their general proportions. However, for the second and third examples which were built later, in the Ming and Ch'ing epochs, the contour of the "neck" has become more slender still, with only a slight tapering, and is turning narrow in proportion to the "belly", as shown in Figure 3.20.

The fifth type of pagoda, the Diamond Throne Pagoda originated from the Mahabodhi Temple at Boddhgaya in India (Figure 3.21.). This prototypical Diamond Throne Pagoda has a high platform on which stand five pagodas, one at each corner, and a taller one in the centre; and the main body of these five pagodas is shaped like a pyramid with a finial on top of it. In China, the style had already been suggested in a wall painting of a Tun-huang cave in the Northern Chou era (A.D. 557-581), as shown in Figure 3.22. It was not until the Ming dynasty during the period A.D. 1457-1460, when the diamond throne pagoda of the Miao-chan (妙湛) temple in the Yünnan (雲南) province was erected, that this type of pagoda was properly established.

Of the pagodas of this kind, Ta-cheng-chueh-ssû-t'a (大正覺寺塔, "True Awakening Temple Pagoda"), which was built in Ming era in the year A.D. 1473, is a typical example (Figure 3.23.). It has a rectangular platform composed of six layers, whose sides are covered with niches and Buddhist images. On top of this platform,

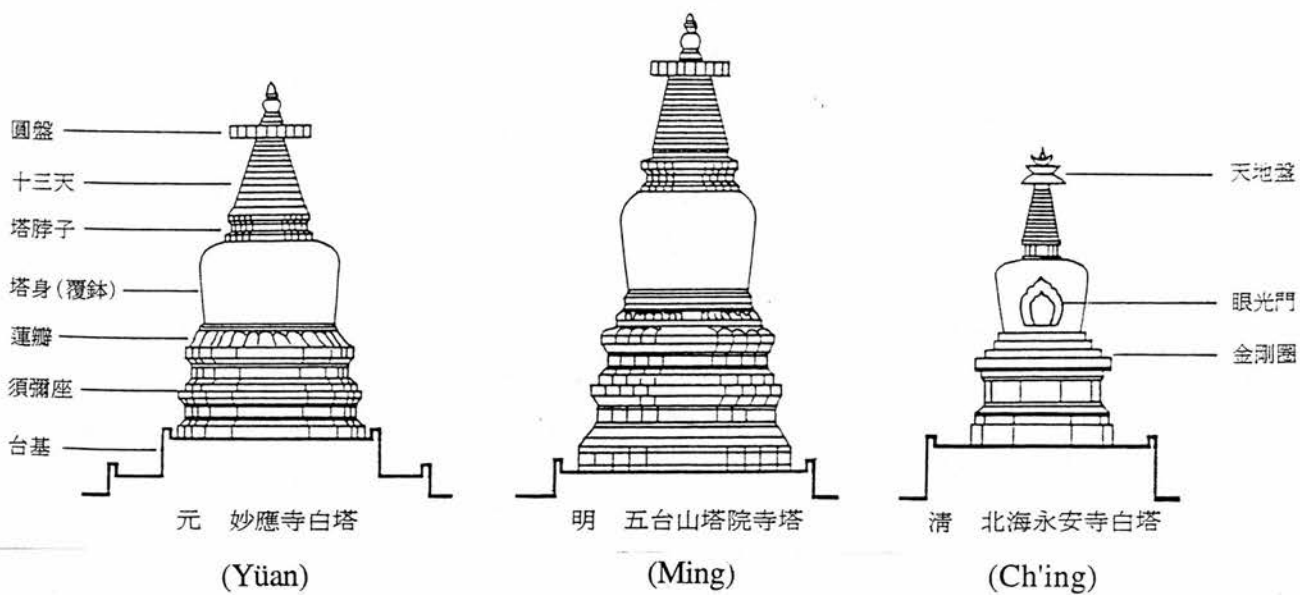


Figure 3.20. Comparative forms of Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing vase-shaped pagodas (Hsieh 1987: 27)

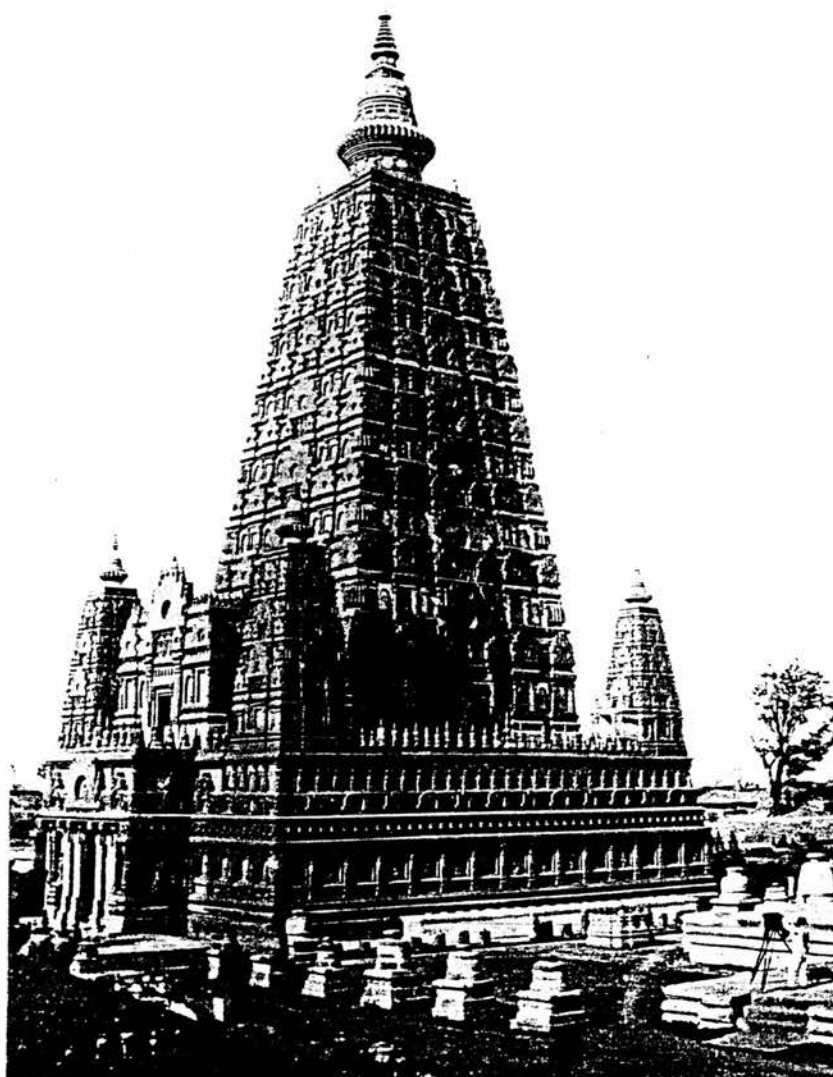


Figure 3.21. Mahabodhi temple, Boddhgaya, India (Mitra 1971, fig. 54)

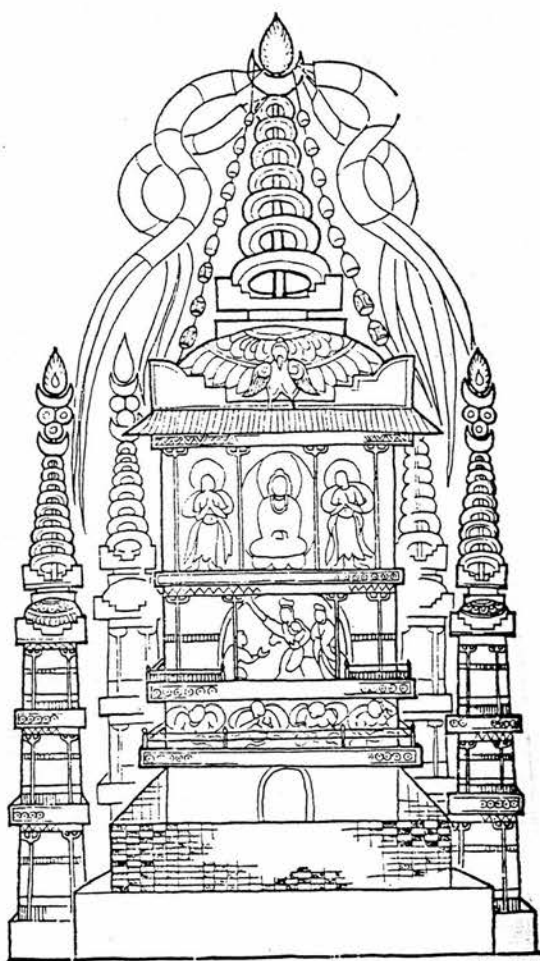


Figure 3.22. Diamond Throne Pagoda, Tun-huang cave temple (painting)
(Li 1978: 358)

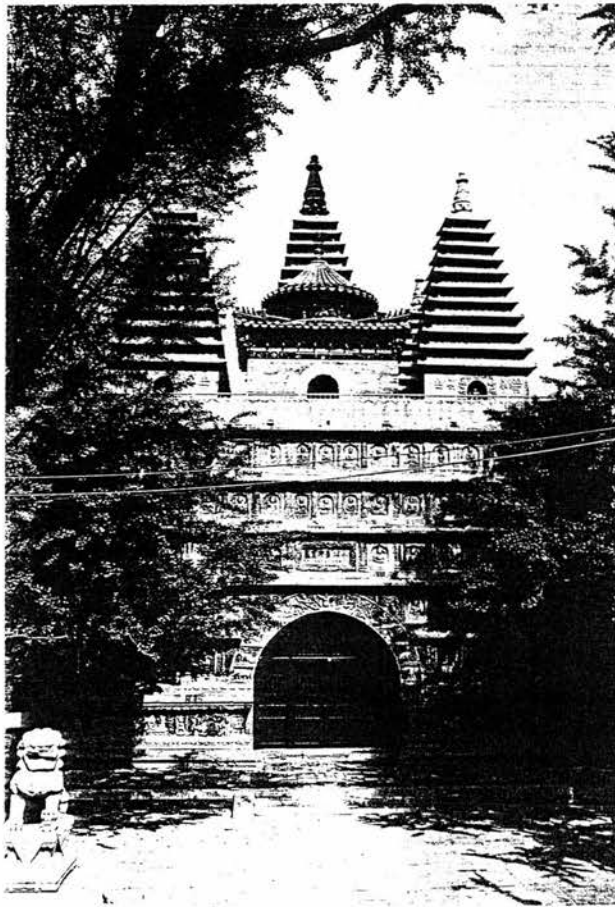


Figure 3.23. Ta-cheng-chueh-ssû-t'a, "True Awakening Temple Pagoda", Peking (Liu 1989: 69)

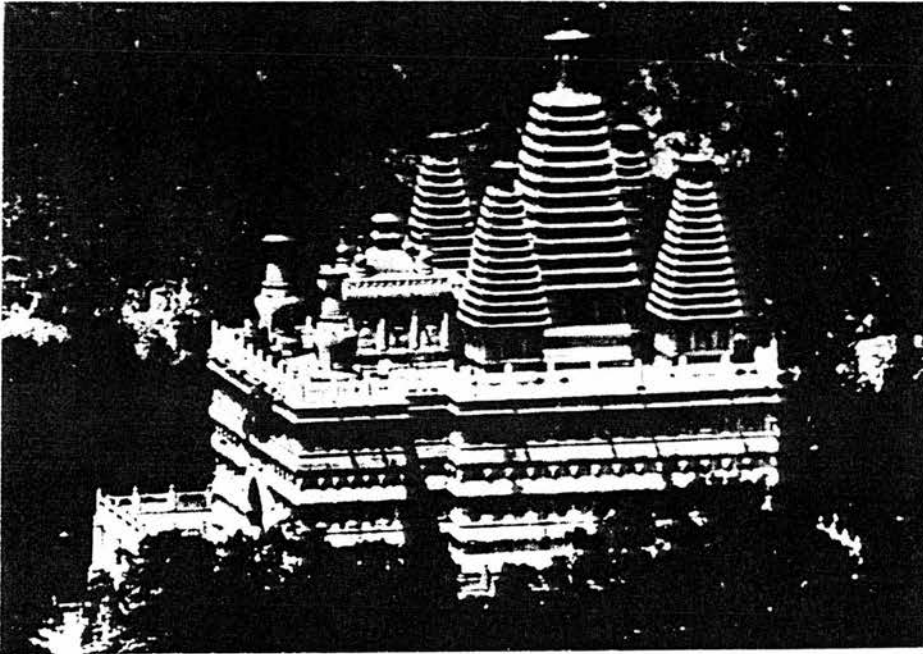


Figure 3.24. P'i-yun-ssû-t'a, "Azure Cloud Temple Pagoda", Peking (Liang 1984: 164)

are five pyramid-shaped towers. Looked at from the outside, this pagoda does show evidence of its Indian origins. However, its building style -- that of the pagodas with the closely layered eaves -- is clearly Chinese. Moreover, in front of the central tower and between the two smaller ones is a small pavilion, such as does not exist in the original Indian Mahabodhi Temple.

A similar instance of this pagoda was built in the Ch'ing dynasty (A.D. 1748) in the P'i-yün-ssû (碧雲寺, "the Azure Cloud Temple"), on Hsiang-shan (香山, "Fragrance Hill"), Peking, as shown in Figure 3.24. Standing on it are five 13-storey towers composed of closely layered eaves, each crowned with an umbrella-like disc. In front of each of these towers stands a pair of smaller vase-shaped pagodas. Another prestigious Ch'ing pagoda of this kind was Hsi-huang-ssû-t'a (西黃寺塔, "West Yellow Temple Pagoda"), built in A.D.1780. It was erected to house the personal effects of the deceased Panchen (班禪) Lama VI. In this connection, instead of a pyramid-shaped pagoda, a huge vase-shaped pagoda was built on the centre of the platform, as shown in Figure 3.25.

To sum up, the pagoda temple, as indicated in Chinese historical documents such as *Wei-shu*, *San-kuo chih* and *Hou Han shu*, was the earliest Buddhist temple to appear on Chinese soil. The general scheme of the pagoda temple consists of a pagoda in the centre as the major building, and surrounding temple halls. As far as the pagoda is concerned, its concept and form is believed to have originated from either the Indian *stûpa* or the early Chinese multi-storey building, or both. Owing to the lack of sufficient documents, it is very difficult to prove one way or the other. However, judging from the architectural appearance of Chinese pagodas, all of the five existing types -- the multi-storeyed pagoda, the close-eaved pagoda, the single-storey pagoda, the vase-shaped pagoda and the Diamond Throne Pagoda -- strongly exhibit a mixture of Indian and Chinese cultural influences.

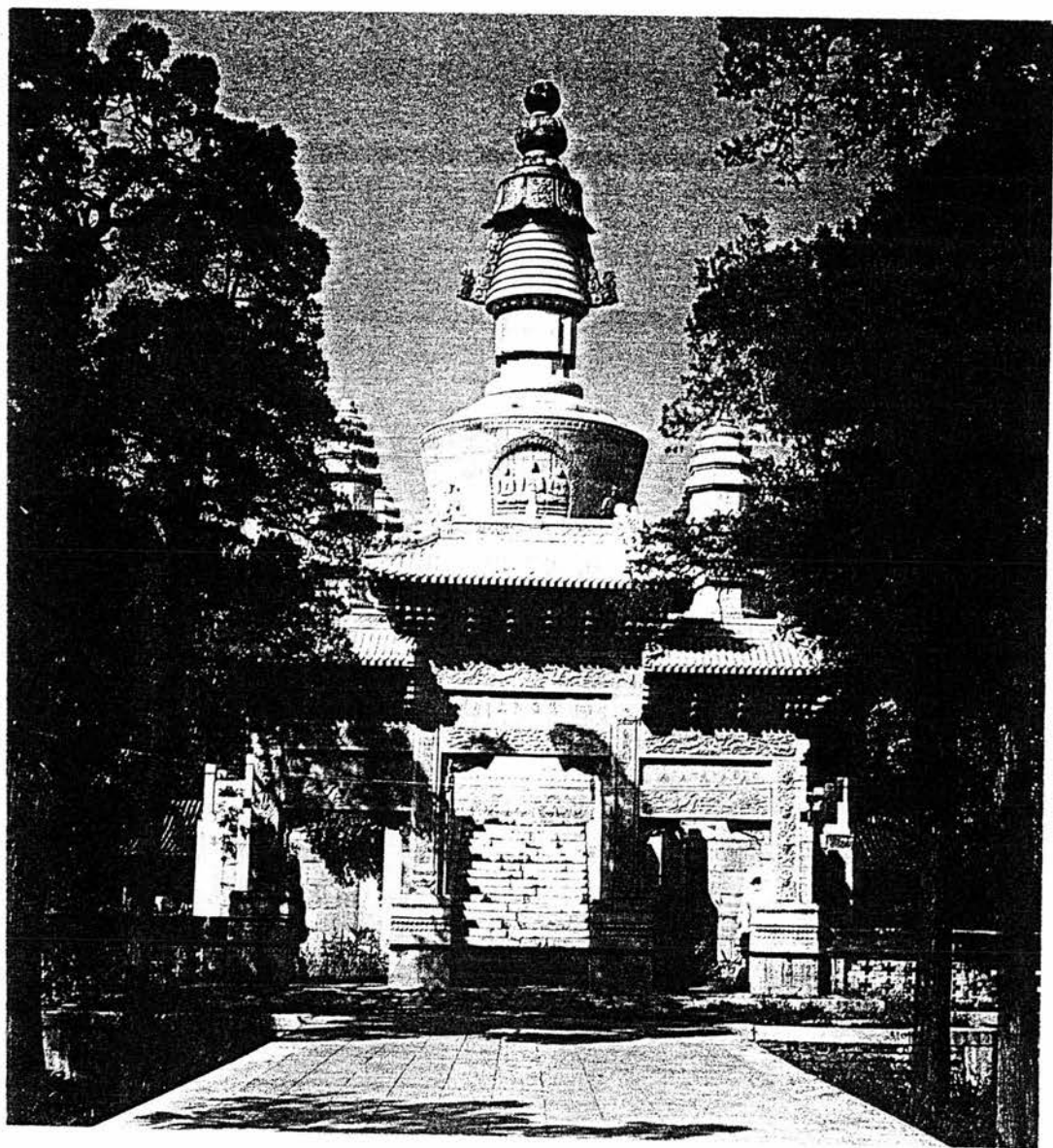


Figure 3.25. Hsi-huang-ssû-t'a, "West Yellow Temple Pagoda", Peking
(Liu 1989: 71)

Of these five styles of pagoda, the multi-storeyed, the close-eaved and the single-storeyed pagodas, although they have differences in aspects like the intermediate space between eaves and the number of storeys on their building facades, all strongly reflect the features of the Chinese wooden structure -- having consecutive sets of supporting systems, a central beam, and columns. On top of each of these three, however, is a finial which is in Indian style.

When it comes to the vase-shaped and diamond throne pagodas, the building styles display more the Indian or Tibetan influences than the Chinese. The vase-shaped pagoda -- the form of which consists of a platform, upon which is a multi-tiered base, with, on top of the base, huge lotus petals supporting a jar-like "belly" with a "neck" and an umbrella-like disc which crowns the whole -- is regarded as "the Tibetan version of the Indian *stûpa*" (Liang 1984: 154) which was sinicised. Moreover, the Diamond Throne Pagoda -- the general scheme of which includes a high platform on which stand five pagodas, one at each corner, and a taller one in the centre, with the main body of these five pagodas, whose form imitates the close-eaved pagoda, shaped like a pyramid with a finial on top of it -- is considered as the Chinese version of the Indian Mahabodhi Temple at Boddhgaya. To sum up, from these five sinicised pagoda styles, we may get some idea of the Chinese interpretation of the foreign Buddhist architecture.

3.3.3. The pavilion temple

The pavilion temple that consists of pavilions arranged around a courtyard, within which pavilion halls are the major buildings, evolved in many parts of China after the arrival of the pagoda temple in the first century. The pavilion temple emerged because of the prevalence of iconic worship during the Eastern Tsin (東 晉) dynasty (A.D. 317-420), pavilions being designed to accommodate images of the Buddha. Moreover, during the Northern Wei (北 魏) period (A.D. 386-535), emperors, nobles and bureaucrats who were devout Buddhists donated their palaces and grand residences for use as temples. After that time, Buddhist temples assumed the same layout as residential houses or palaces which were constituted from a number of halls and courtyards. In China, Nan-ch'an-ssû (南 禪 寺) and Fo-kuang-ssû (佛 光 寺), both built in the T'ang era, and standing on Mount Wu-tai in Shansi province, are two of the earliest extant examples of this kind, and are shown in Figure 3.26. & 27. The former, which is the older one (A.D. 782), consists of a gatehouse, four side halls, a main hall, a monks' residence and courtyards; and the latter (A.D. 857), of a gatehouse, a side hall, a main hall, a monks' residence and courtyards.

After the fall of the T'ang, many pavilion temples were built, a number of which remain well preserved today, notably the famous Lung-hsing-ssû (隆 興 寺, A.D. 971) of the Sung dynasty, Tu-le-ssû (獨 樂 寺, A.D. 984), the upper and lower Hua-yen-ssû (上 下 華 嚴 寺), Shan-hua-ssû (善 化 寺) of the Liao dynasty, the upper and lower Kuan-sheng-ssû (上 下 廣 勝 寺) of the Yüan dynasty, as well as numerous temples built in the succeeding Ming and Ch'ing dynasties.

In layout, the pavilion temple, as mentioned above, is believed to have evolved from that of residential houses or palaces which were constituted from a number of halls and courtyards. In China, the basic unit out of which a group of buildings was

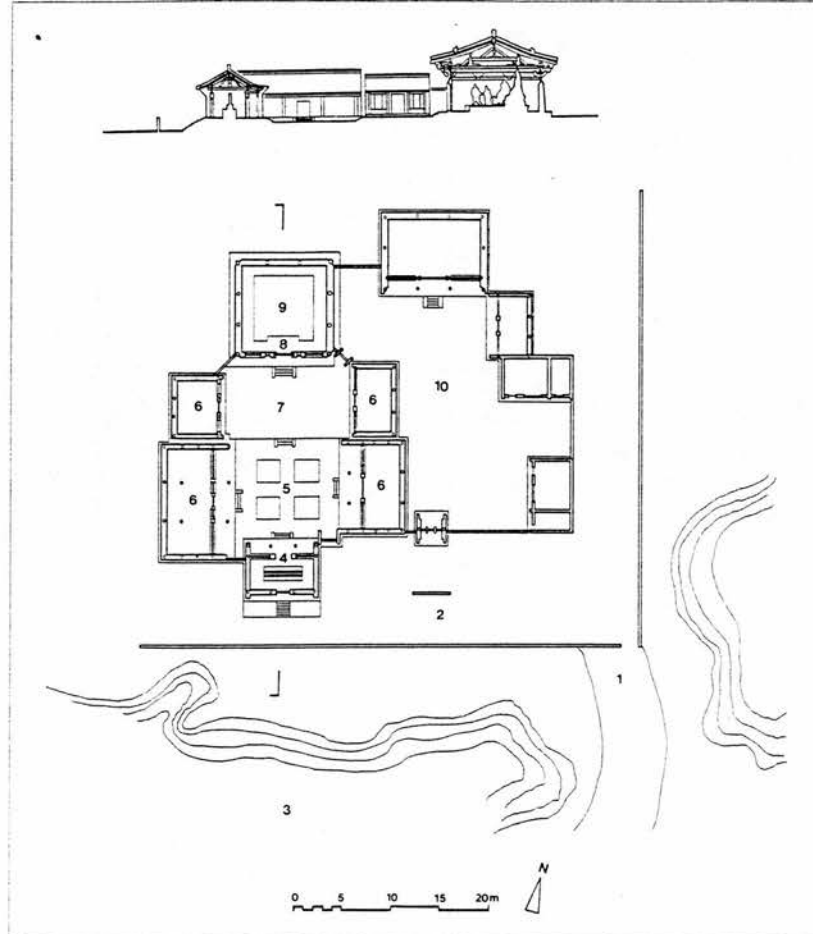


Figure 3.26. Nan-ch'an-ssû, Shansi province (Liu 1989: 88)

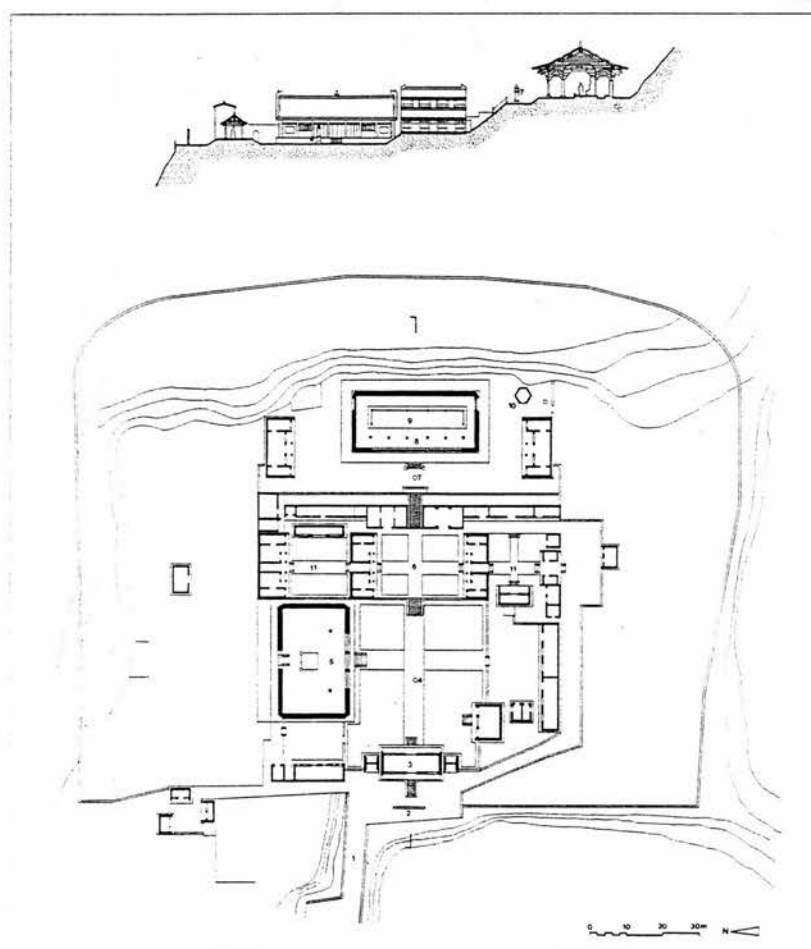


Figure 3.27. Fo-kuang-ssû, Shansi province (Liu 1989: 90)

composed is called the *ssü-ho-yüan* (四合院), a courtyard enclosed with buildings on four sides, as shown in Figure 3.28. In this system, the fundamental building component is a single building constructed around a courtyard. These courtyard houses can then be grouped along a central axis, as shown in Figure 3.29, or other subsidiary axes to form more complex structures -- there might be free-standing halls within a courtyard or these separate structures may be linked to surrounding buildings with galleries or siderooms -- as shown in Figure 3.30.

As far as the function of individual building is concerned, some of these halls have religious functions, others are just monks' residences. Initially, a temple is believed to have consisted of at least seven halls for religious use; as a group these are referred to as *ch'ieh-lan-ch'i-t'ang* (伽藍七堂, "Seven Halls of the Buddhist Temple"), as shown in Figure 3.31., and they are the gatehouse (*san-men* 山門), the bell and drum towers (*chung-lou* 鐘樓, *ku-lou* 鼓樓), the pagoda (*t'a* 塔), the Great Buddha Hall (*ta-fo-tien* 大佛殿), the Dharma Hall (*fa-t'ang* 法堂) and the meditation hall (*ch'an-t'ang* 禪堂).⁹⁰

The gatehouse is the main entrance of the temple premises. Spiritually speaking, it functions as the point at which the line between the sacred Buddhist kingdom and the profane world is demarcated and a gateway through which a novice commences the journey through the different stages of spiritual cultivation towards final enlightenment. "The procession through the architectural space of the [temple] is said to be like the progression of the spiritual stages of a novice" (Ho 1992: 81); and

⁹⁰ In the temples of the Ch'an school, we may find another arrangement of these seven temple halls. As *Zenrin Shōkisen* records, a Ch'an temple consisted of the gatehouse, the main Buddha Hall, the Dharma Hall, the meditation hall, the kitchen-storage, the monks' living quarters, and the bathroom. The monks' living quarters here, unlike ordinary living quarters, possess both living and meditational functions. These seven halls of the Ch'an temple were slightly different from the traditional model, but they still fulfil the three religious functions of the Chinese Buddhist temple (see Liu 1986: 83-4). The three religious functions here referred to are the three Jewels of Buddhism, namely the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, which I shall discuss later in 3.4.

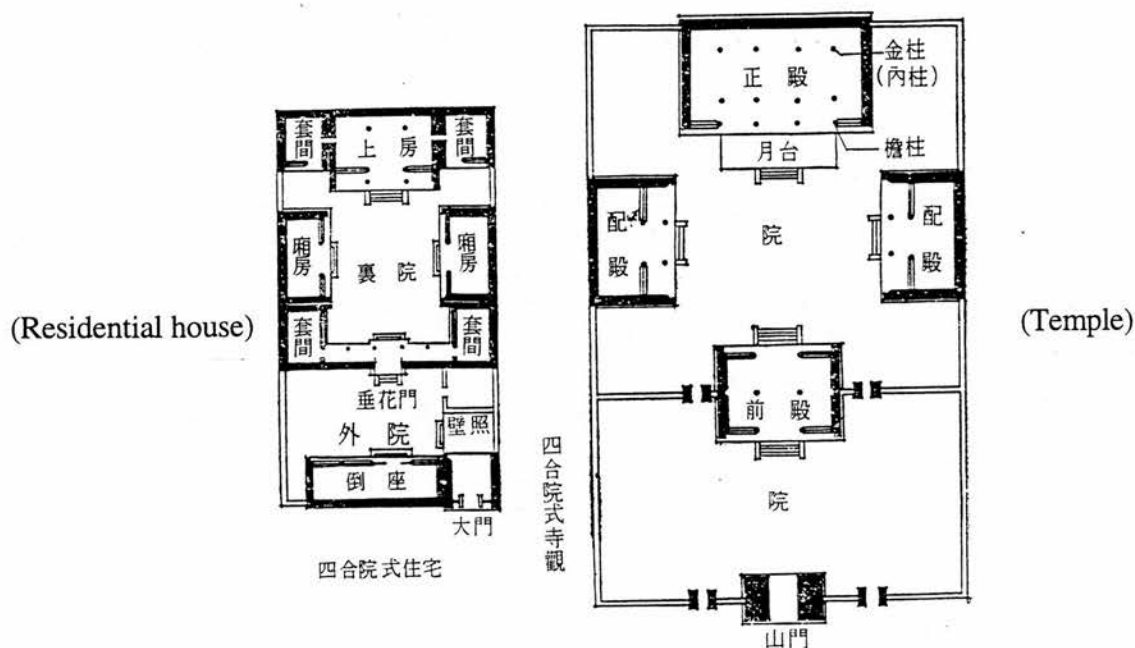


Figure 3.28. Comparative *ssû-ho-yüan* plans of residential house and temple (Li 1984: 29)

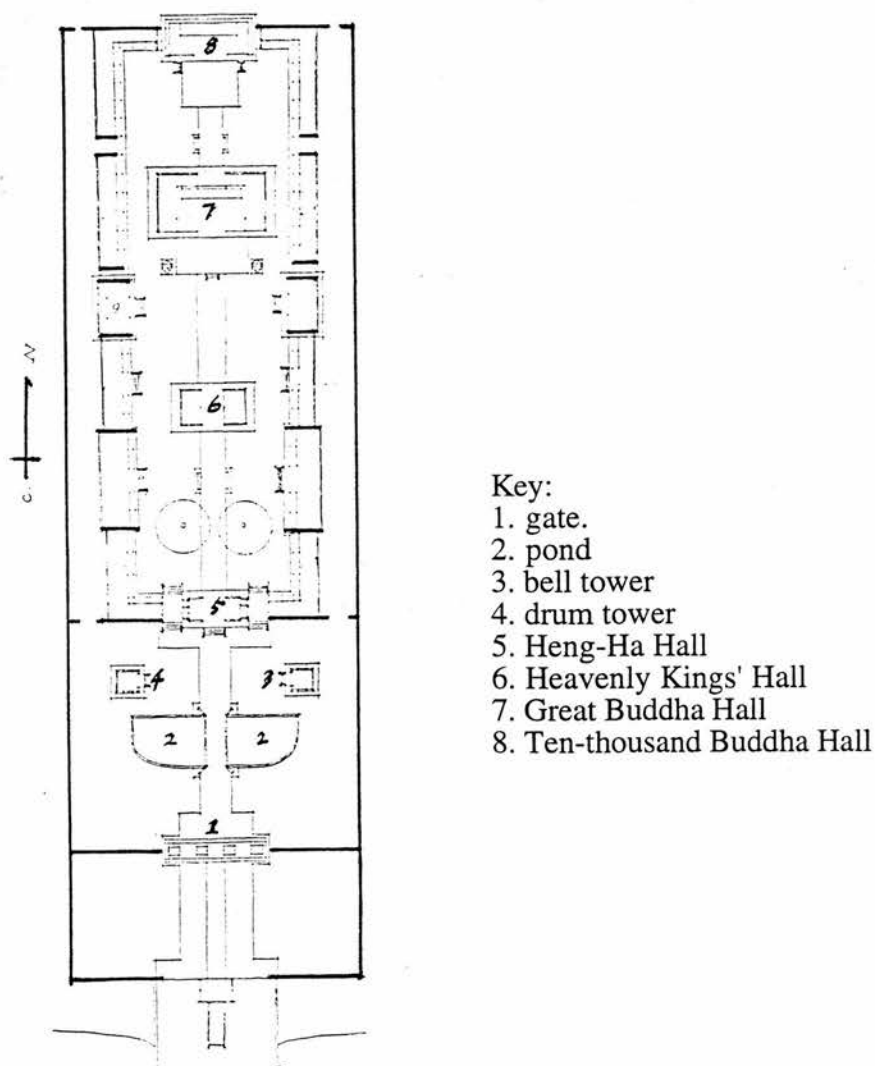


Figure 3.29. Plan, Wo-fo-ssû, Western Hills, Peking (Prip-moller 1937: 94)

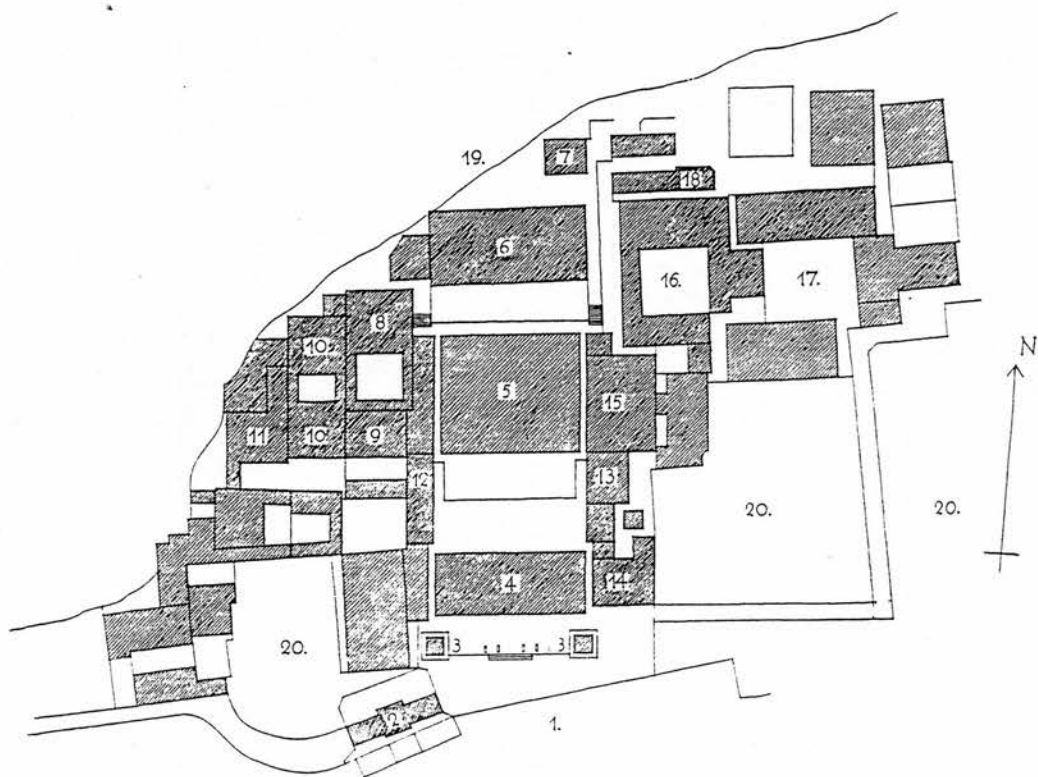


Figure 3.30. General layout, Ting-hui-ssû, Chekiang province
(Prip-moller 1937: 17)

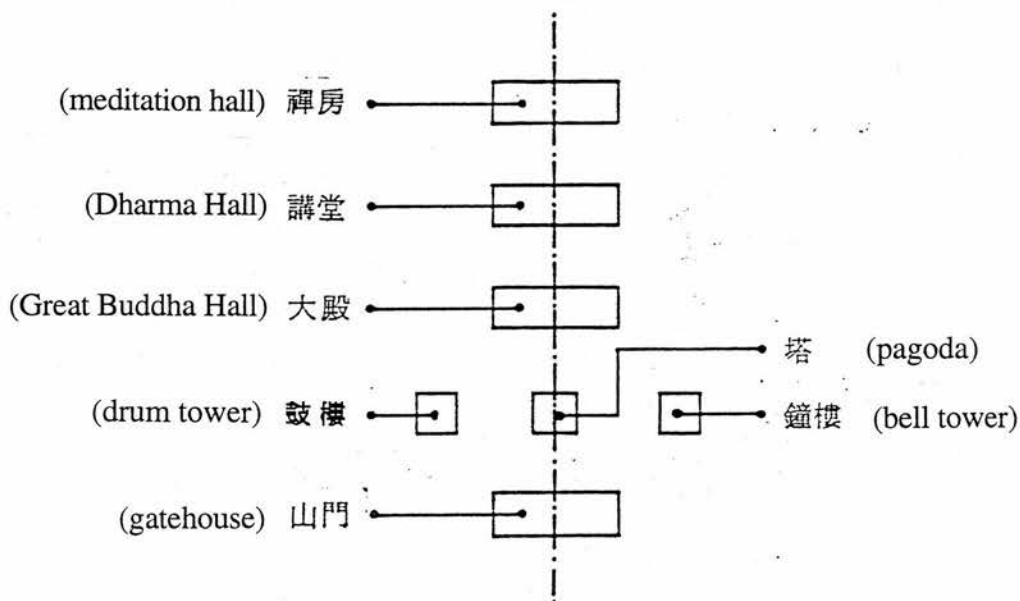


Figure 3.31. Layout, *ch'ieh-lan-ch'i-t'ang*, "Seven Halls of the Buddhist temple"
(Liu 1986: 83)

the gatehouse here is the starting point. The bell or drum tower is basically a pavilion tower within which a bell or a drum is installed. With the sounding of its bell or drum, the tower functions as a clock marking the time schedule of the monks' daily lives and also, most importantly, it plays a part in ceremonial rituals.

As to the pagoda, evolving as it does from both the Indian *stûpa* and the Chinese pavilion tower, the building possesses features both of the Indian Buddhist monument and the traditional Chinese multi-storey building (See above 3.3.2.). Some pagodas house Buddhist images, for example the Fo-kung (佛 宮) temple pagoda (Figure 3.32.); but most of them are empty. In keeping with its Indian tradition, the pagoda, spiritually speaking, functions as the presence as well as the symbol of the Buddha, and this is manifested by its location within the temple premises. At the beginning of the spread of Buddhism, the pagoda, like the main Buddha Hall, served as the spiritual as well as the architectural centre of the temple. With the pagoda being the focus of the premises, the temple is called the pagoda temple (See above 3.3.2.). In course of time, with the increase of Buddhist iconic worship, the importance of the pagoda declined. The pagoda was then shifted away from the centre to the outskirts of the temple, and eventually placed outside the temple. Subsequently, the pavilion halls replaced its role and formed the major parts of the temple, and the examples of temples where this has taken place are called pavilion temples.

The Great Buddha Hall, or the Great Hall, which is normally the first building to be erected in a new temple, enshrines the main Buddhas who are the saviours of all sentient beings and represent the ultimate goal in the spiritual path of the novices. Therefore, this hall, spiritually and architecturally speaking, is the climax of the temple and should be constructed with most care in order to reflect its supreme status. In addition to housing the Buddha, the hall also provides space in front of the main altar

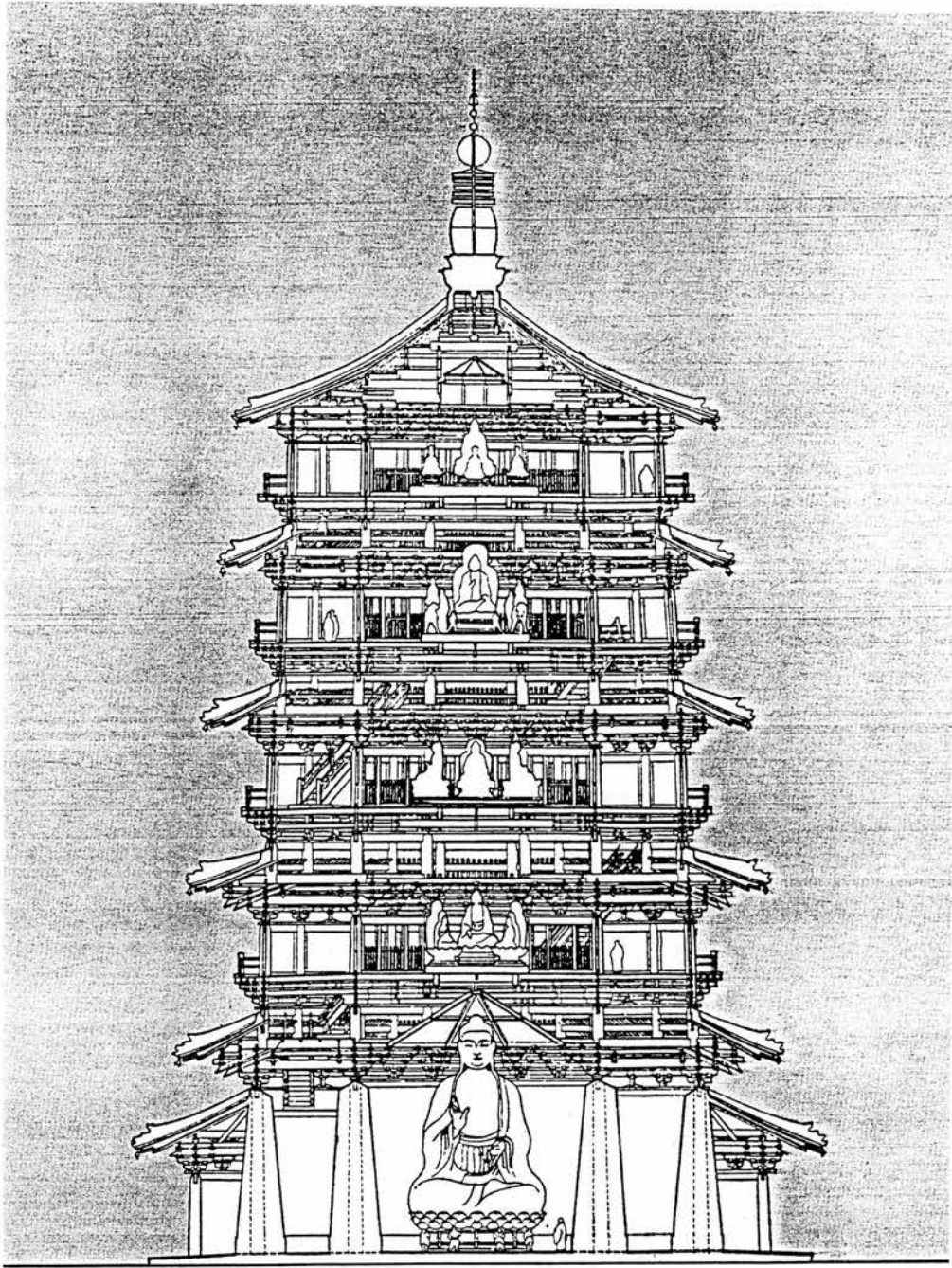


Figure 3.32. Section, Fo-kung temple pagoda (Li: 1986: 152)

where religious activities such as the ritual ceremonies can take place. It is the place where the Dharma is preached.

The aim of building the Dharma Hall is mainly to allow abbots to deliver religious instruction to the monks as well as to devout laymen. Because of its educational function, it is also referred to as the audience hall. The religious message the abbots deliver here is primarily that of the Dharma, or the Wheel of the Law. The image of the sacred law as a wheel-like apparatus derives from the Buddhist belief that all sentient beings are trapped in a cyclical existence from which they can escape by reaching the state of *nirvâna*, or by achieving Buddha status (For discussion of the belief, see above 2.2.2. and 2.4.2.). In the ideology of one particular sect, the Dharma is of greater significance than the Buddha image: in a Ch'an temple, it is not even necessary to have a Great Buddha Hall, but only a Dharma Hall (Ho 1992: 80).

The meditation hall is the hall where monks can practise their meditative techniques (For discussion of the practice of the meditation, see above 2.5.1.). Meditation is an integral part of Buddhist monastic life. Normally, there is a meditation ceremony held in the central room of the hall where there is a concentration of columns as shown in Figure 3.33. In the ceremony, the monks start with a physical activity -- encircling the clustered columns, and ending up in the meditation pose. The purpose of this bodily exercise is to give the monks an additional discipline which may help them enter the realm of the meditation.

In course of time, many other halls were added to the temple premises to fulfil the three religious functions -- those of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha (For details, see below 3.4.) -- and, in particular, to enshrine an increasing number of Buddhist images. They included the Heavenly Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien* 天王殿), which was built to house images of the four heavenly kings and the other devas; the

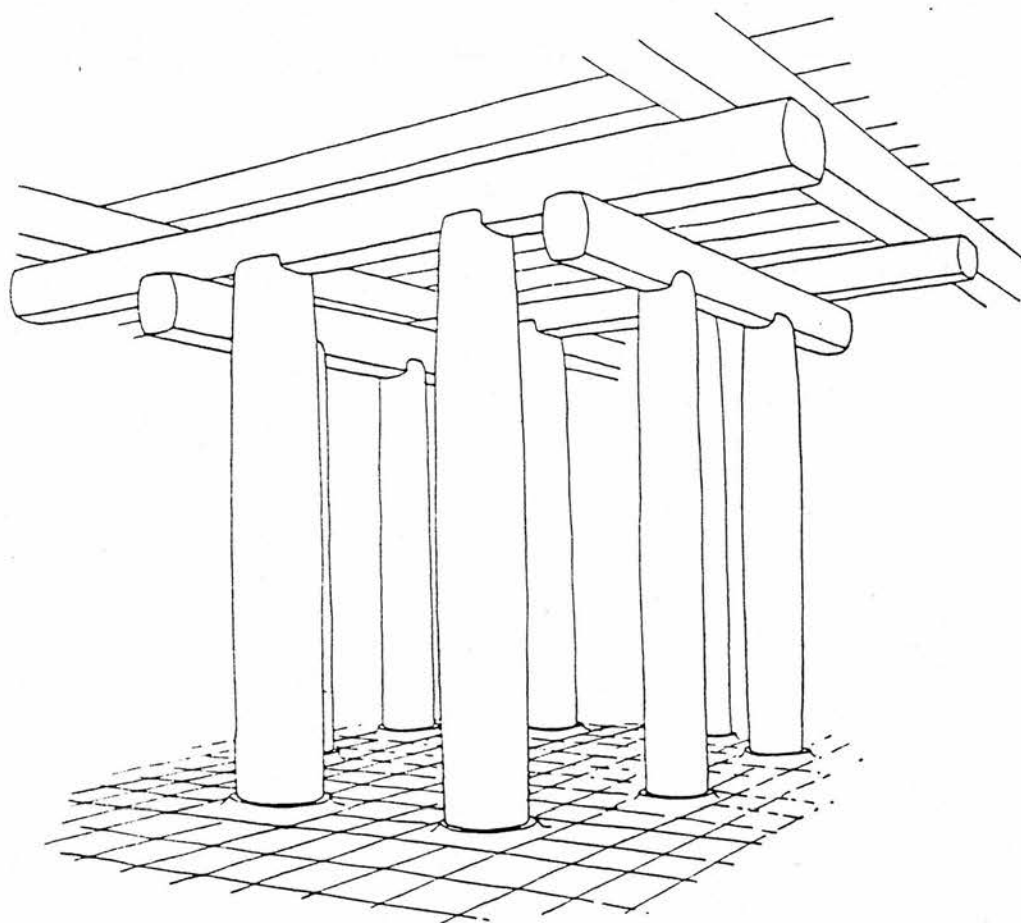


Figure 3.33. Concentration columns in meditation hall (Prip-moller 1937: 75)

Bodhisattva Hall (*p'u-sa-tien* 菩薩殿) for deities such as Avalokitesvara, (Kuan-yin 觀音, or "Goddess of Mercy"); the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall (*wan-fo-tien* 萬佛殿) which served to enshrine the whole pantheon of Buddhas; the Patriarch Hall (*tsu-shih-t'ang* 祖師堂) for the images of patriarchs of each school; and the *arhat* hall (*lo-han-t'ang* 羅漢堂) for the icons of the Buddhist saints - *arhats*.

In addition, the library (*ts'ang-ching-lou* 藏經樓) with a revolving repository (*chuan-lun-ts'ang* 轉輪藏) (Figure 3.34.),⁹¹ was a building specially designed to store the vast amount of Buddhist sutras. The ordination hall (*chieh-t'an* 戒壇) was the place where novices were ceremoniously received into the temple. To secure its sacredness, the hall was usually located at some distance from the rest of buildings. The monks' living quarters, including dormitories of permanent dwelling space for the abbot (*fang-chang* 方丈) and his disciples (*sheng-fang* 僧房) as well as temporary accommodation for visiting monks and laymen (*yün-shui-t'ang* 雲水堂), a refectory (*chai-t'ang* 齋堂) and storage rooms (*k'u-fang* 庫房), and these were either placed behind the religious halls or to the side of them.

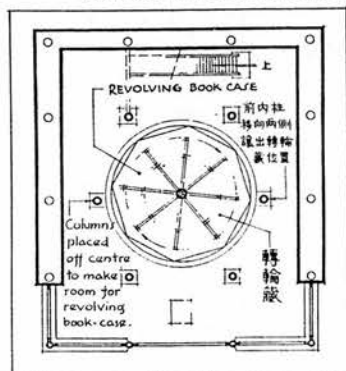
To sum up, the pavilion temple emerged on Chinese soil because of both the gradual prevalence of iconic worship and the donation of the grand residences of emperors and nobles as Buddhist temples. Owing to this, the general scheme of Buddhist temples, following the traditional Chinese building planning principle, consists of a number of halls and courtyards. In planning, these courtyards and halls may be grouped along one central axis, or other subsidiary axes to form more complex structures. As far as the religious function of individual buildings is concerned, there are initially seven halls, which are built along the central axis of the temple to serve various religious purposes, namely, the gatehouse (*san-men* 山門), the bell and drum

⁹¹ This is an ingenious device formed by a pillar in the centre: each of its eight sides is hollowed out and filled with sutras. It was invented as early as A.D. 544 by a pious believer named Fu-hsi.

河北正定縣 龍興寺
轉輪藏殿 宋建

LIBRARY BUILDING, LUNG-HSING SSU, CHENG-TING,
NORTH SONG DYNASTY
960-1127.
HOPEI

平面及剖面圖中皆顯示特殊結構方法以適應安置轉輪藏之需要。



平面圖 GROUND FLOOR PLAN

0 5 10M.
平面縮尺 SCALE FOR PLAN

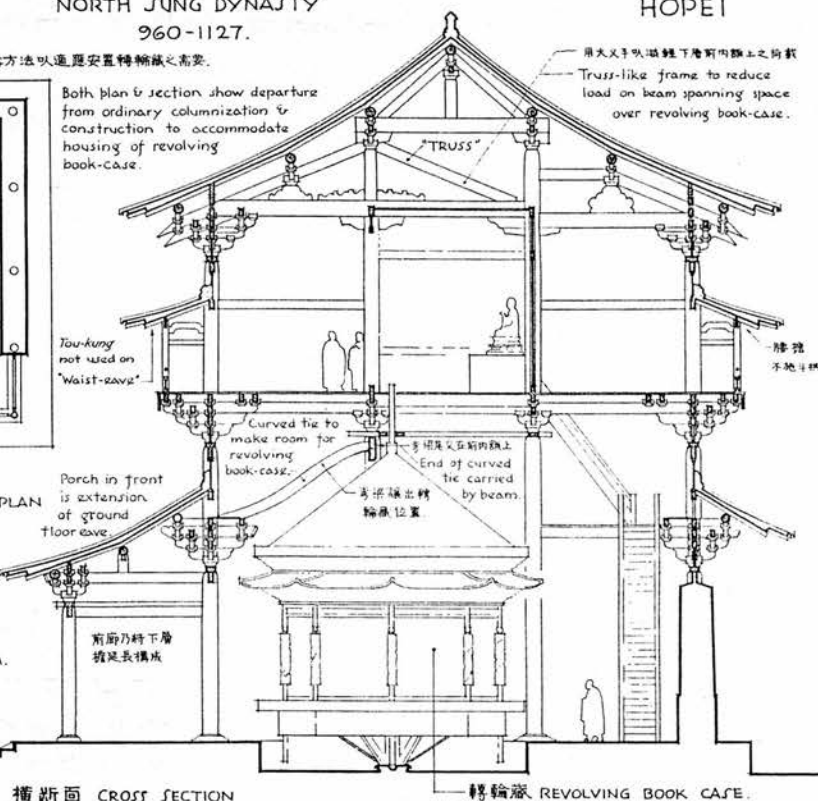
1 0 5M.
断面縮尺 SCALE FOR SECTION

Both plan & section show departure from ordinary columnization & construction to accommodate housing of revolving book-case.

Tou-kung not used on "Waist-eave"

Porch in front is extension of ground floor eave

前廊乃時下層 檐延長構成



橫断面 CROSS SECTION

Figure 3.34. Revolving repository in library building, Lung-hsing-ssû, Hopei province (Liang 1984: 79)

towers (*chung-lou* 鐘樓, *ku-lou* 鼓樓), the pagoda (*t'a* 塔), the Great Buddha Hall (*ta-fo-tien* 大佛殿), the Dharma Hall (*fa-t'ang* 法堂) and the meditation hall (*ch'an-t'ang* 禪堂).

Of these seven halls, the gatehouse is the main entrance of the temple premises. In a religious sense, it is also the starting point of the spiritual journey towards final enlightenment. The bell and drum towers are employed to serve ritual purposes as well as being a clock marking the time schedule of the monks' daily lives. The pagoda, in the early spread of Buddhism, was placed in the centre of the temple functioning as the spiritual centre of the temple. In the course of time, it was displaced from that position by the Great Buddha Hall. This Great Buddha Hall, in which the Buddhas are enshrined, symbolises the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey of devotees. As for the Dharma Hall and meditation hall, they serve as the places in which devotees cultivate their minds. The former is the auditorium where devotees receive teachings from the abbots of the temple; the latter is the monastic chamber where devotees practise meditation techniques.

Over the ages, many other halls were added to the temple premises to fulfil a variety of religious purposes. In order to accommodate these halls, the grouped courtyards and halls of the temple expanded from the central axis to other subsidiary axes. In this way, the temple structure became more and more complex and diverse, with various halls connecting with one another by courtyards and corridors.

3.4. THE RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS -- THE THREE JEWELS OF BUDDHISM

No matter what the variations of the architectural patterns of the Chinese Buddhist temples (See above 3.3.), these temples are above all institutions fulfilling one primary function -- a religious one -- and are concerned with activities that revolve around the triad known as the Three Jewels (*Triratna* in Sanskrit, *San-pao* 三寶 in Chinese), namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha (Figure 3.35.).

The first, and original function of the Buddhist temple is to house the Buddha, *Fo* in Chinese (Figure 3.36.). At the outset of Buddhism, monasteries (*vihâras*) which afforded shelter to the teacher and his followers during the rainy season were built by wealthy devotees and gifted to the Buddha, and in these he spent most of the seasons of rest and delivered many important lectures (Mitra 1971: 8). After the Buddha died, ten *stûpas* were built immediately as memorials to the great spiritual teacher,⁹² and many more were built subsequently. Inside the *stûpas*, his relics and objects such as his hair, finger nails, begging-bowl, robe and even *sûtras* were enshrined, to encourage devotees to continue to regard the Buddha with reverence. *Stûpas* serving in this way as symbols of the Buddha could be found everywhere, within the precincts of the cave sanctuaries as well as in temples. In the course of time, with the emergence of the sculptured and pictorial images of Buddha, he was no longer regarded as a great teacher whose presence was to be indicated by symbols, but was deified, worshipped as a saviour, and his image ceremonially embellished. From then on, figures of the Buddha were incorporated into all Buddhist architecture throughout the world.

⁹² According to accounts written at the time when the Buddha died, ten *stûpas* were built immediately after his cremation: eight over his *sarîra*, or corporeal remains, the ninth over the urn which had been used to collect these, and the tenth over the embers of his funeral pyre (Mitra 1971: 7).

(Buddha)

(Sangha)

(Dharma)



Figure 3.35. Three Jewels of Buddhism (Liu 1986: 107)

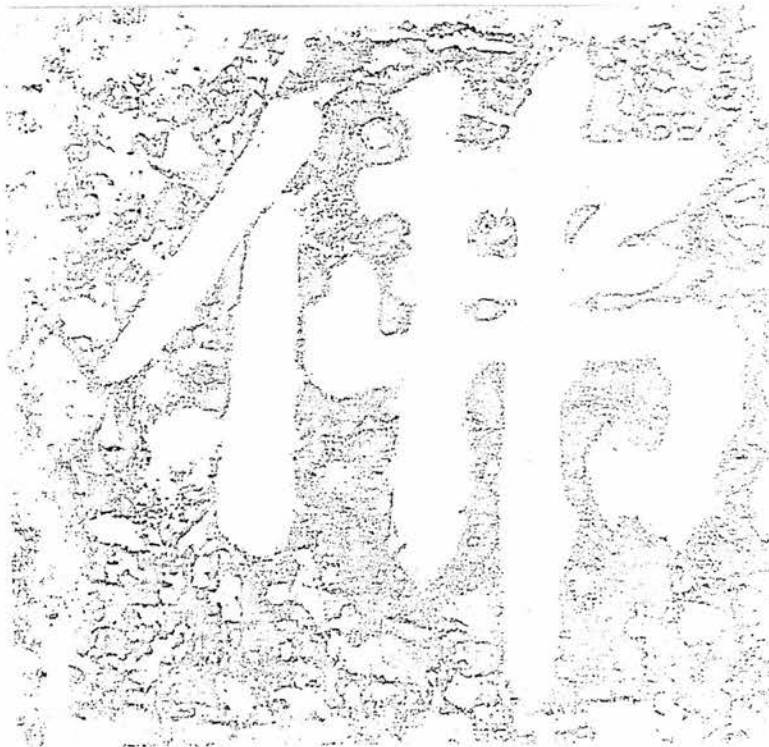


Figure 3.36. The character for Fo, Yu-ch'i-ssû, Kiangsu province (Prip-moller 1937: 183)

At the beginning of the spread of Buddhism to China, the overriding importance of housing the Buddha was shown in the nomenclature of the early temples which were called *fu-t'u-ts'û* (浮屠祠, "Pagoda Temple"). This name signifies that the pagoda is the most important building in the temple precinct which is in keeping with what was traditional in India, since it was the pagodas which symbolised the Buddha. Subsequently, pavilions as well as cave temples were built to accommodate images of the Buddha and to allow for the practice of worship and ritual ceremonies, and these became the most important elements in the temples, and like the pagodas, took pride of place in terms of layout.

The second most important function of the Chinese Buddhist temple was to provide a setting for propagating the Buddhist faith, and, in particular, preaching the Dharma, and offering salvation not just to the select few but to all sentient beings which is the central idea of Chinese Mahâyâna Buddhism.⁹³ In the Buddhist definition of it, the Dharma possesses a three-fold nature, namely, Law, Truth and Doctrine.

To stress its normative aspect we can translate it 'Law'; to stress its vertical aspect we can translate it 'Truth'; to stress that it is what the Buddha taught and Buddhist believe we can translate it 'Doctrine'." (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 12-3)

In order to preach this "Law", "Truth" or "Doctrine" with the aim of achieving salvation for all, the Chinese Buddhist temple carried out a two-fold program of religious education, one aspect external and one internal. The first or internal aspect concerns the education system within the temple before and after the initiation of novices. Being a novice in the temple, the devotee was constantly addressed with lessons on the Dharma by the master of the Law, and had to pass tests on the sutras before he could be initiated (Ch'en 1964: 285). After joining the monastic order, i.e.

⁹³ In propagating the religion, Chinese Buddhism concentrated its preaching on the Mahâyâna idea of salvation. For further discussion of the inner development of Chinese Buddhism and the Mahâyâna idea (see Reichelt 1934: 23-54).

becoming a monk, the devotees are given lectures regularly in the Dharma hall by the abbots or eminent monks.

The second program concentrates on preaching the Dharma externally to society. The approaches that the program employ include lectures on the sacred scriptures and debates on doctrinal points. These lectures and debates were formerly carried out either outside the institution in the emperors' palace or the homes of aristocracy by the itinerant teachers, or within the Dharma hall of temple by the master of Law (Ch'en 1964: 186-7). For the latter, the audience consists of the monks of both this temple and others, the laymen, and so on. In this way, the Dharma message will be passed on not only to the pious noble but also the devout commoner.

The final and the third function of the Chinese Buddhist temple is to accommodate the Sangha. The term Sangha, in its strict sense, and that which has become usual and will be used in this thesis, refers to those Buddhists who have been officially ordained. However, in its wider sense, the Sangha referred to all people who had accepted the teachings of the Dharma (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 13). The Buddhists then consist not only of monks and nuns, but also laymen and laywomen. The idea that the Chinese Buddhist temple was itself viewed as a locus for the community of the Buddhist brotherhood is endorsed by its nomenclature. The temple is often referred to as *ts'ung-lin* (叢林, "Forest"), by the Sangha, or Buddhist brotherhood.⁹⁴ That is to say, it is conceived of as a compound composed of the individual "trees" or members of the Buddhist society. In Chinese Buddhist terminology, there are two kinds of temple, the *shih-fang ts'ung-lin* (十方叢林, "Forest of the Whole World") and the *tzu-sun ts'ung-lin* (子孫叢林, "Forest of Posterity").

⁹⁴ This term, which is a translation of *pindavana* in Sanskrit, occurs in *O-yü-wang ching*, translated as early as the beginning of the sixth century.

The idea of *shih-fang ts'ung-lin* is that the property of the temple belongs to the whole Brotherhood, or Buddhist community. Therefore, the temple which is connected with the *shih-fang ts'ung-lin* group will always be prepared to give hospitality to wandering monks.⁹⁵ The other name, *tsu-sun ts'ung-lin*, means that the temple is in the possession of a special clan or school of Buddhists. These temples reserve their hospitality for those monks from the same clan or school (Reichelt 1934: 253). Although this exclusivity seems somewhat contrary to the fraternal nature of Buddhism, the *tsu-sun ts'ung-lin* type of temple seems to have been perceived as superior to the *shih-fang ts'ung-lin*. The reason for this is probably because of the popularity of sectarian Buddhism in China.

To sum up, in China, all the religious activities that the Buddhists practise in the temple originated in the Three Jewels of Buddhism -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Therefore, the Buddhist temple can be defined as a place for housing the "Buddha", preaching the "Dharma", and accommodating the "Sangha", and it is because of the coexistence of these three functions that I have chosen to use the all-embracing term "temple" in this thesis, rather than "monastery" or some other word with more limited connotations.

In terms of the individual buildings of the temple, if we take *ch'ieh-lan ch'i-t'ang* (伽藍七堂, "Seven Halls of the Buddhist Temple") as an example (Cf. 3.3.3.), the Great Buddha Hall and the pagoda -- both serving as the house and symbol of the Buddha -- are built to fulfil the first function (the Buddha); the Dharma Hall and the gatehouse for entering the "Lawful" land serve the second function (the Dharma); and the meditation hall and the bell and drum towers are to meet the third

⁹⁵ But only if they belong to the Buddhist brotherhood and are able to prove their standing as ordained monks.

function (the Sangha). As for the growing number of halls built within the temple precinct in the course of time, no matter what the variety of purposes behind them and the diversity of their outer appearances, they are, as mentioned above, all fulfilling these three religious functions.

Of course, besides the three major religious functions, there were other minor functions, mostly economic in nature, that the temple fulfilled. For example, during the T'ang era, the temples were involved in establishing and managing water-powered stone rolling mills, oil presses, hostels, pawnshops, and the Inexhaustible Treasuries, and serving as landlords for huge estates (Ch'en 1964: 261-73). These commercial enterprises were mostly donated by pious devotees who hoped thereby to accrue religious merit. The profits acquired from running these businesses were mainly used in fulfilment of the three major religious functions.

3.5. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Certain aspects of the Chinese Buddhist temple are adopted directly from established Chinese architectural practice. One such is the application of *chien* (間) (the space enclosed by two parallel timber beams -- one bay), as shown in Figure 3.37., as the standard measuring unit in the spatial organisation of individual pavilion buildings.⁹⁶ Another instance which enables the Chinese Buddhist temple to accommodate an increasing number of halls built within the premises is the employment of the courtyard house (*ssû-ho-yüan* 四合院), mentioned above, as the basic unit out of which a group of buildings was composed.

⁹⁶ In India, the original term for the measure used for the size of floor space is room, or *fang*, rather than bay, or *chian*. An account contained in *Ken-pen-shuo yi-ch'ieh you-pu p'i-na-yeh sung*, or *Mulasarvâstivâdanikâya-vinaya-gâthâ*, stipulates that, "... A space of two rooms in front [of the complex is to be set aside] for the construction of a gate-tower" (TSD 24. 651b. 8-19; translated by Chinese monk I-ching, taken from Ho 1992: 73).

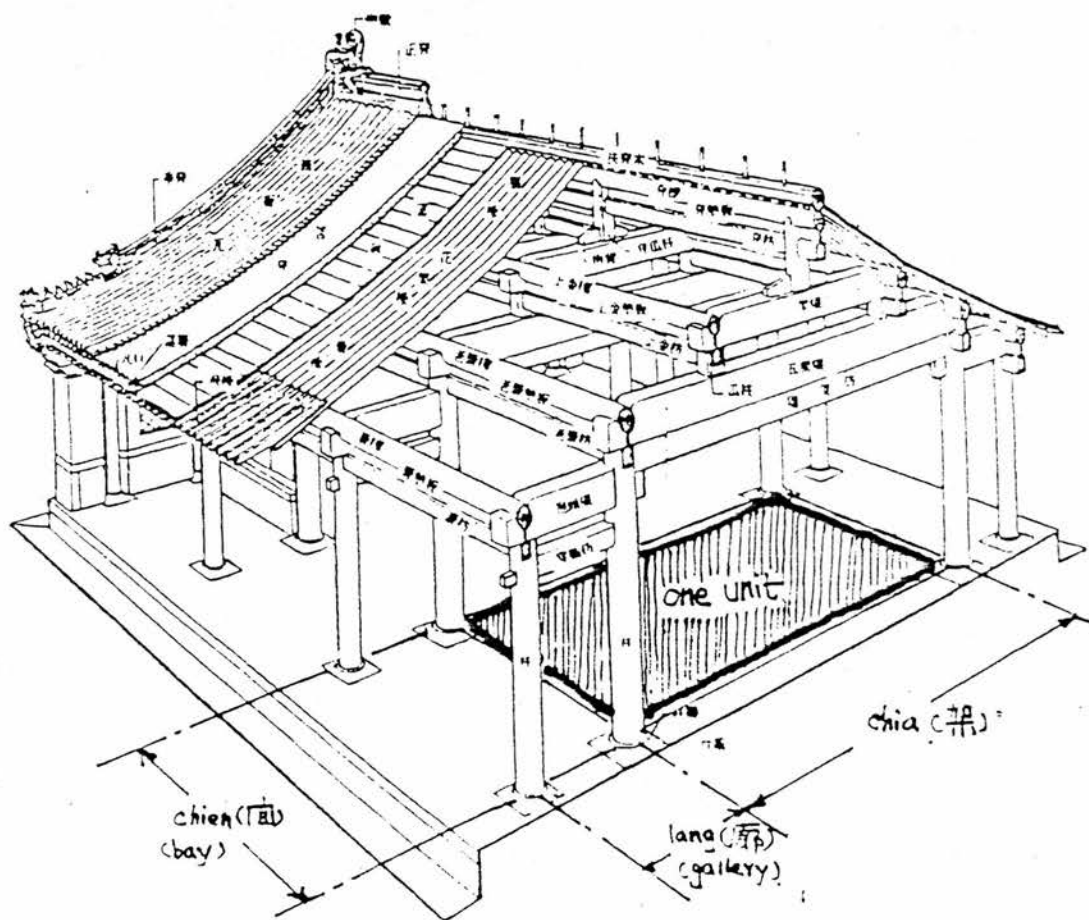


Figure 3.37. *Chien*, "Unit of Space", Chinese traditional building (Hsü 1986: 4-, fig. 1.8)

As far as the structural system is concerned, the Chinese Buddhist temple, following the building principle of traditional Chinese architecture, employs the wooden constructional techniques known as the "post and lintel" framework (Figure 3.37.), which allowed windows and doors to open more fully. The walls of the model wooden structure were simply screens and partitions which carried no load. Moreover, the use of the standardised bracket set, *tou-kung* (斗 拱),⁹⁷ as shown in Figure 3.38., was introduced as a decorative feature of the temple, but also, most importantly, as a means of supporting the overhanging eaves. Temple architects took advantage of the *tou-kung* producing the widespread roof with overhanging eaves which gives the Chinese Buddhist temple its distinctive appearance, as shown in Figure 3.39. Here, the curvature of the roof was achieved either by the "raise and depress", the "raising the truss", or the "overhanging eaves" method.⁹⁸

The traditional Chinese architectural characteristics mentioned above have more to do with architectural style than religious import, and have been widely discussed in a great number of documents. I shall not replicate by going into any further detail. In this section, I shall briefly discuss the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the religious doctrine is embedded, namely, the orientation, the axuality, the form of individual buildings, and the iconography. The details and symbolism of these will be explored in turn in chapters four, five, six, and seven.

97 "The *tou* was so called because it was a block of wood resembling a capacity measure, *tou*, in shape, and the *kung* or bow-piece was the double elbow spaced arm supporting one of these on each side." (Hsu 1986: 4) And the measurement of every single structural component of building is based on the module, *ts'ai* 材, which is the end elevation of the horizontal corbel bracket arm, *hua-kung* 華 拱 (see Hsu 1986: 4).

98 The "raise and depress" method was a canon for structural carpentry to determine the pitch and curvature of a roof during the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960-1279). The "raising the truss" method was a canon for the same purpose during the Ch'ing dynasty (A.D. 1644-1911). The "overhanging eaves" method was a canon of using double rafters to construct the eaves into a curved form during the Ch'ing dynasty. This elaborate curved roof was characterised by five variations (see Hsu 1986: 3).

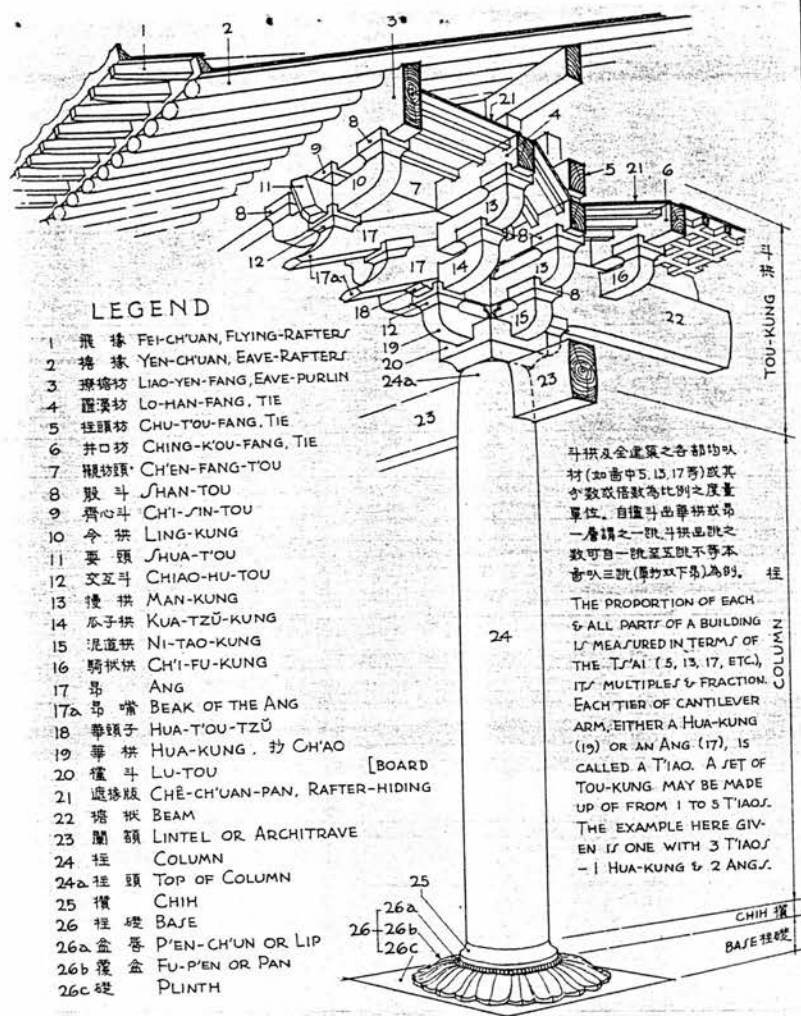


Figure 3.38. *Tou-kung*, "Chinese Order" (Liang 1984: 10)

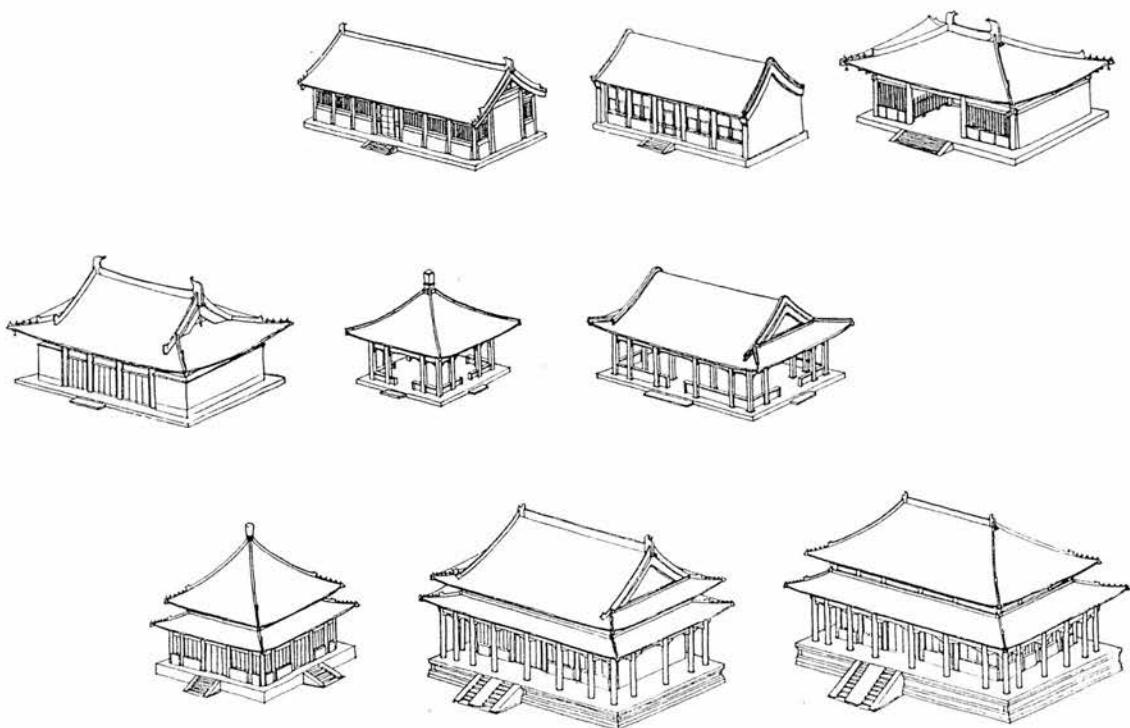


Figure 3.39. Comparative forms of various roofs (Liang 1984: 11)

A. The space of the Chinese Buddhist temple is organised in accordance with the cardinal directions -- North, South, East, and West. Within its premises, attention to cardinal orientation is manifested in the temple aspect, the grouping of monks in assembly, and the spatial organisation of the abbots' quarters, the Diamond Throne Pagoda, the cave temple, and the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall, as follows.

- (a) The temple compound has a south-facing orientation (See below 4.3.2.).
- (b) The assembly of monks in the refectory, the meditation hall, and the Great Buddha Hall are grouped into the east and west zones during ritual ceremonies (See below 4.3.3.).
- (c) The abbot's residence consists of east and west quarters (See below 4.3.3.).
- (d) Based on the doctrine of *mandala*, the general scheme of the Diamond Throne Pagoda consists of five pagodas with one located in the centre and the others disposed along the axes in cardinal directions (See below 4.4.).
- (e) On the basis of the doctrine of the proliferation of Buddha pantheon, the interior wall and ceiling of the cave, the inner and outer wall of the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall, and the facade of the Diamond Throne Pagoda are filled with numerous niches, within each of which a Buddha image is enshrined (See below 4.5.).

B. Temple halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple are grouped in accordance with the principle of axuality. Within the premises, the essential characteristic of the axuality is manifested in the arrangement of the primary buildings for serving the major religious functions on the North-South axis, the Buddha trinity on the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall, the hierarchy of buildings on the central longitudinal axis, and Buddhist cremation and meditation, as follows.

- (a) The primary halls of the temple are arranged on its central axis, that is the North-South axis (see below 5.3.).
- (b) There are two Buddhas seated on both sides (the East and the West) of the central Buddha on the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall (See below 5.3.).

(c) The hierarchy of the primary halls along the central longitudinal axis is manifested as follows: the entrance gate -- the Heavenly Kings' Hall -- the pagoda -- the Great Buddha Hall -- the Dharma Hall (See below 5.4.).

(d) In the Chinese Buddhist world, cremation is used as the method of disposing of the bodies of deceased monks; meditation is employed as the way of achieving spiritual sublimation. In Buddhist connotation, both the outward flame of cremation and the inward "flame" (See below 5.5.) of meditation refer metaphysically to the *axis mundi* through which the devotee attains his Enlightenment.

C. The forms of individual buildings of the Chinese Buddhist temple evolve from both Indian Buddhist monuments and traditional Chinese architecture. The characteristics in which the religious doctrine is embedded are the central post of the cave and pagoda, the outward storey of the multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagoda, the roof spire of the pagoda, and the inner space of the cave.

(a) In the centre of the archetypal pagoda and cave there is a column (See below 6.2.).

(b) The storeys of the multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagoda are odd in number. The figure ranges from five to thirteen (See below 6.3.).

(c) The superimposed discs decorating the roof spire are odd in number. The figure also ranges from five to thirteen (See below 6.4.1.).

(d) The pagoda is crowned by a gourd or jewel finial (See below 6.4.2.).

(e) The inner space of the cave serves as a serene and dark place for the spiritual cultivation of the devotee (See below 6.5.).

D. In terms of conceptual motifs and concrete images, the essential characteristics of the iconography of the Chinese Buddhist temple are the metaphysical pattern of the wheel and lotus and the figurative depictions of the trinity, the four heavenly kings, the commander general Wei-t'o and two guardian generals.

(a) These conceptual motifs and images within the temple premises are mostly shown in association with one another. For instance, it is common in scenes that the figures of wheel and lotus serve as the ornament of the other images -- either as the pedestal or the nimbus (See below 7.2. and 7.3.).

(b) In these notional figures, both the spokes of the wheel and petals of the lotus are even in number (See below 7.2. and 7.3.).

(c) The primary images are chiefly to be found in the three leading locations -- the entrance gate, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, and the Great Buddha Hall -- on the central longitudinal axis (See below 7.4.).

CHAPTER 4
THE SYMBOLISM OF ORIENTATION
AND
THE DOCTRINE OF THE PROGENITIVE CENTRE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The principle of orienting the temple in accordance with the cardinal directions possesses both Indian and Chinese origins. In India, the orientation of architecture is determined by the movement of the sun. Cast by a pillar-gnomon (*sanku-sthâpana-vidhâna*), the shadow of the sun points to each of the four cardinal directions, and by this means the architecture is oriented (For the procedure of determination of cardinal directions, see Figure 4.1.). By following this principle, buildings within the temple complex were organised focusing on a single architectural element -- the *stûpa*, which represents the *axis mundi*. The Great Stûpa in Sanchi (Figure 4.2.) is a typical instance of this kind. Another instance is found in a temple complex in Central Asia (Figure 4.3.).

In China, as in India the orientation of architecture is determined by the movement of the sun. Cast by a pillar-gnomon, *pei* (碑) in Chinese, the shadow of the sun points to each of the cardinal points from which the architecture is oriented.⁹⁹ Evidence of this spatial organisation is found in both smaller scale examples of traditional Chinese architecture such as the residential house, palace, and religious

⁹⁹ As described in *K'ao-kung chi* (考工記) section (B15) of *Chou-li* (周禮), "They erected a post, took a plumb-line to it, and then observed its shadow. They described a circle, and then recorded the shadow of the sun at its rising and setting." (Wheatley 1971: 426) Moreover, as testified in the Ode of *ting-chih fang-chung* (定之方中), "When [the constellation] *ting* had attained the zenith, he began to build the Ch'u (楚) palace. When he had calculated [its orientation] by the sun, he began to build the Ch'u mansion." (Ibid.)

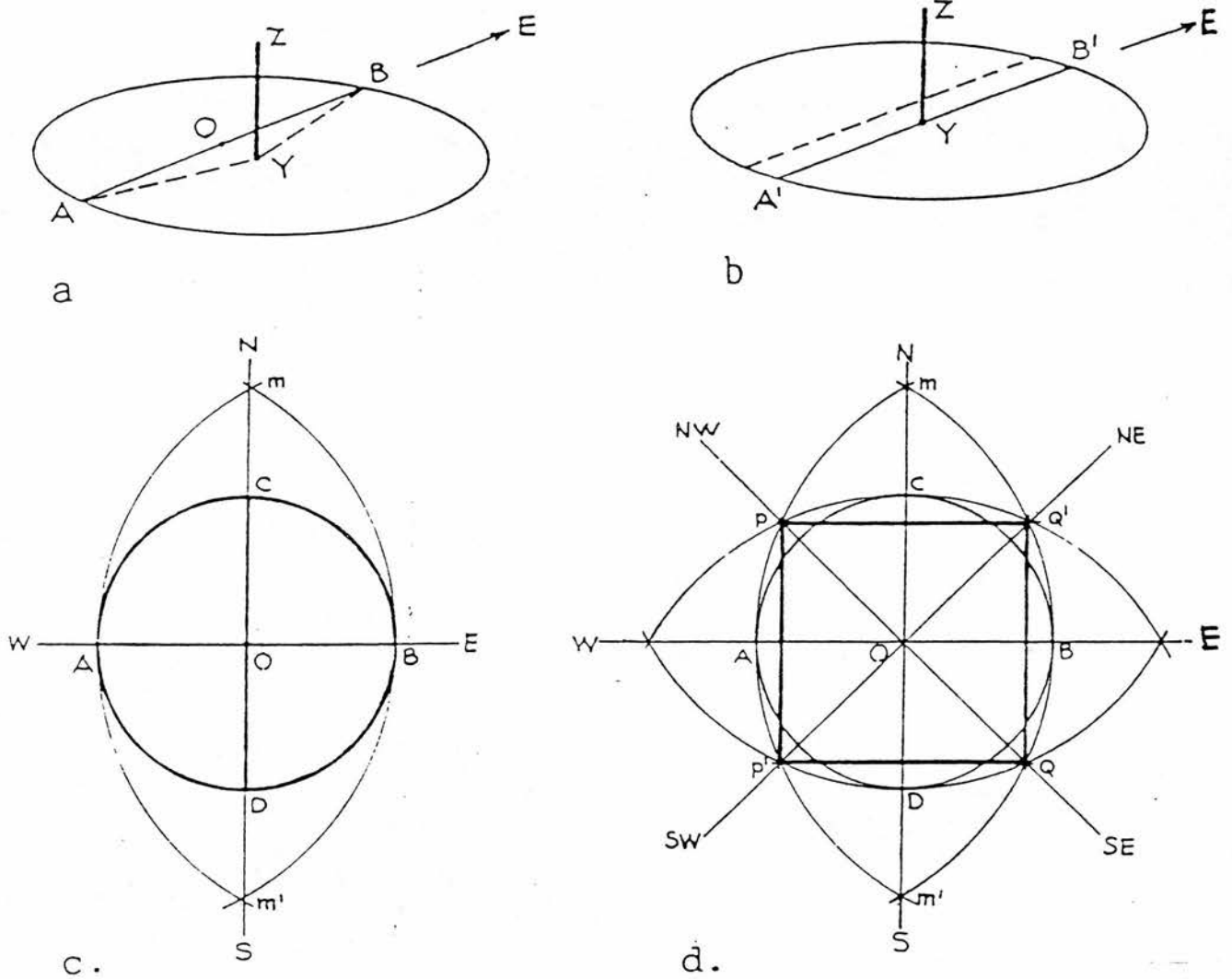


Figure 4.1. Procedure of orienting Indian temple architecture (Snodgrass 1990: 129)

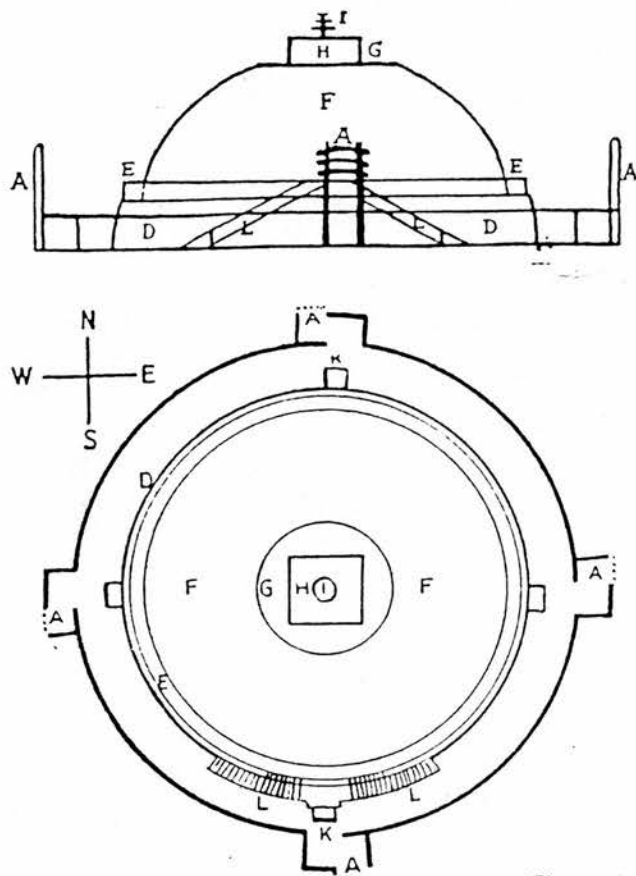


Figure 4.2. Great Stûpa , Sanchi (Govinda 1976: 12)

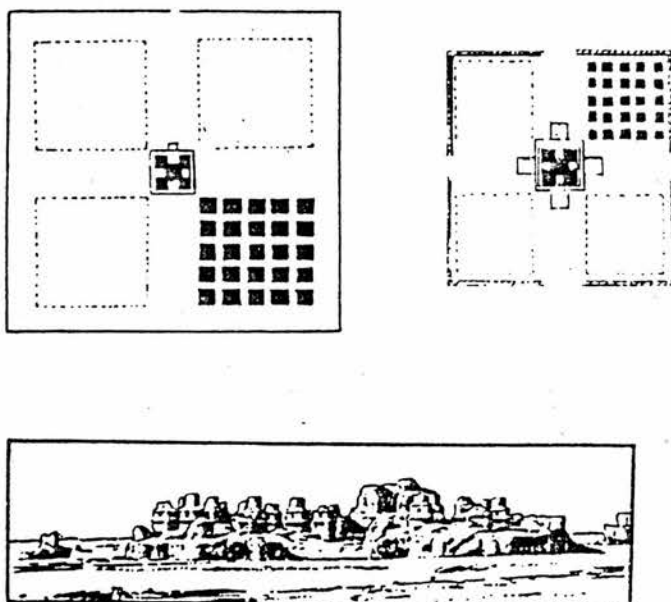


Figure 4.3. Stûpa complex, Chotscho, Turfan, Sinkiang province (Snodgrass 1985: 127)

temple, and the larger scale such as the city and even the whole kingdom. On the smaller scale, an instance is the Temple of Heavenly Deity (*ming-t'ang*), the plan of which is oriented towards the four cardinal directions (See above Figures 2.6. and 2.7.); on the larger scale, the plan of the Chinese imperial capital K'ai-feng, which occupied a square area, and was enclosed by a massive wall, as illustrated in Figure 4.4., was drawn in conformity with the cardinal points, which were, according to *Chou-li*, determined by the emperor (Wheatley 1971: 423-5)

In keeping with the Indian and Chinese traditions, the space of the Chinese Buddhist temple is organised in accordance with these cardinal directions -- North, South, East, and West. The religious basis of this cardinal orientation lies in the metaphysical function of the temple (See above 1.2.); the temple compound is regarded as a sacred place where Heaven and Earth are connected and through which passes the *axis mundi*.

As far as individual cardinal direction is concerned, each of the four directions has specific religious significance. The North is regarded as the projection of the Pole Star on the earth. In the celestial order, the Pole Star represents the Centre, and, to Chinese, the residence of Shang-ti, the governor of Heaven. In this connection, the North is considered as an auspicious cardinal point which symbolises the cessation of suffering.¹⁰⁰ Within the premises of the temple, the Great Buddha Hall, the spiritual Centre, is often located in the North, at the northern end of the North-South axis (See below 5.3.), rather than in the geometrical centre.

In contrast to the North, its complement, the South, is considered as the place of summer solstice in terms of the terrestrial order. As such, it represents sunshine and

¹⁰⁰ In the Buddhist view, the life of beings in this world is suffering. The end of the world means the termination of suffering for beings.

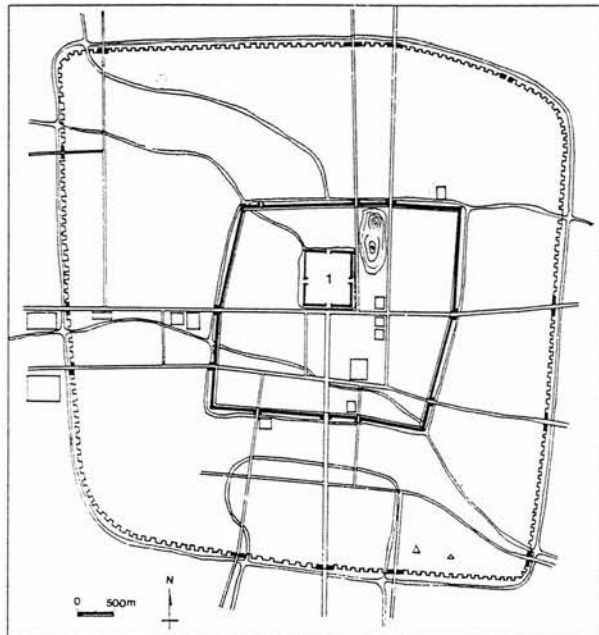
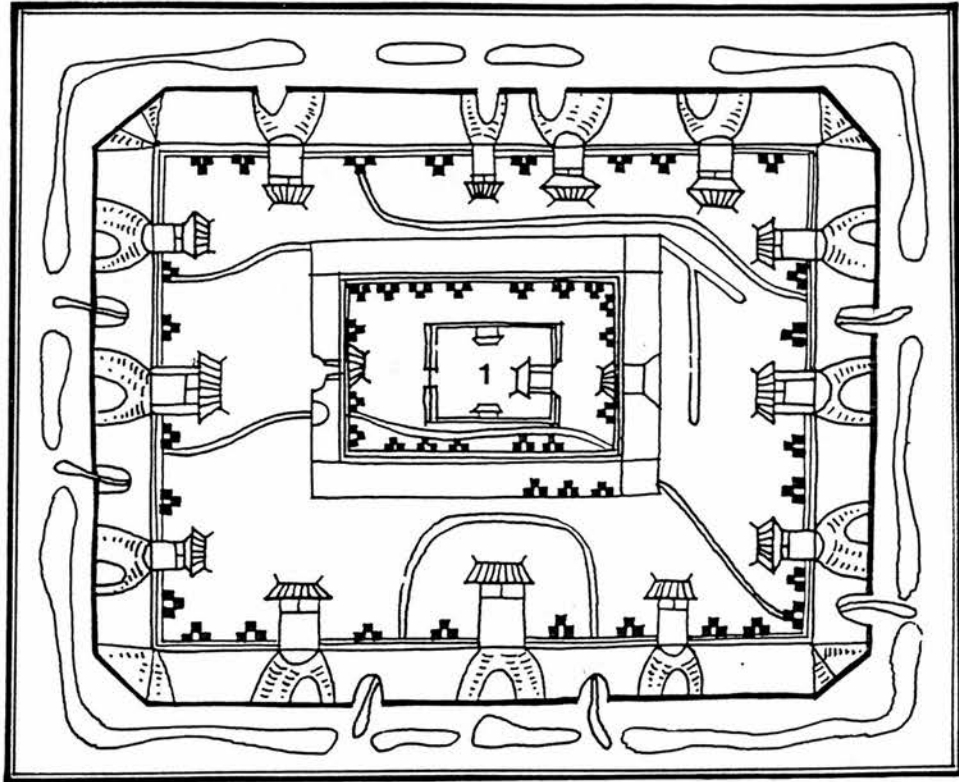


Figure 4.4. City plan, K'ai-feng, Hunan province, Sung dynasty
(Liu 1989: 49 & 50)

light, and symbolises the bright side of life, *yang*. In this context, the North has more negative connotations, being the location of the winter solstice, and therefore representing the dark side of life, *yin*. For this reason, halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple face due South in order to embrace the light -- *yang* -- and turn their backs upon the North, the direction of evil influence, darkness -- *yin*. The south-orientation principle has, in fact, governed the siting of traditional Chinese architecture for millennia.

As to the East and the West, by following the daily course of the sun, the East, being the place where the sun rises, symbolises spring, *yang*, increasing light, and renewal; the West where the sun sets represents autumn, *yin*, decreasing light, and decline. In this view, the East is more auspicious than the West. Within the temple premises, the significance of the East and the West is reflected in the grouping of the east and west parties of monks in assembly and the spatial organisation of the east and west abbots' quarters.

Apart from the orientation of the temple compound, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, and the consequent teaching of *mandala* and the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon, is also embodied within individual buildings. So far as the *mandala* is concerned, the doctrine is chiefly expressed in the layout of the Diamond Throne Pagoda which consists of a group of five pyramid pagodas, one located in the centre and the others disposed along the axes in cardinal directions. This refers to the geometrical form of the *mandala* which can be expressed as a circle contained within a square.

The circle represents the Progenitive Centre, the source of creation, from which all multiplicity issues. As to the square, its perimeter demarcates the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Its area is subdivided by invisible perpendicular

lines into many small squares, each of which is ruled by a Buddha, or a Bodhisattva. The relative positions of the deities in the squares reflects their status in the celestial world; their appearance in the *mandala*, which corresponds to the supramundane Buddhist kingdom, is brought forth by the Progenitive Centre, the Buddha who occupies the central spot of the *mandala*. In Tantrism, the central Buddha, or the Progenitive Centre, is believed to be the Buddha Vairocana. The connection between the Progenitive Centre and the multiplicity is the lines of Breath (*prâna*) which are represented by the invisible criss-crossed lines that subdivide the *mandala* plan.

The concept of the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon is embodied by the innumerable small Buddhas image studded all over the walls and ceilings of Buddhist architecture. In Buddhist interpretation, the appearance of the Buddha pantheon is caused by the Buddha, the progenitive Centre, who has the power to multiply so prolifically as to fill space in all directions and the three cosmic eras (*kalpas*) -- the past, the present and the future (Kloetzli 1989: 65). The purpose of this multiplication of innumerable Buddhas is to save all sentient beings who are suffering in the endless cycle of rebirth (See above 2.4.2.).

Buddhism acknowledges no creator-god. Instead, the religion introduces the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre from which the world is created. As part of the multiplicity that the Centre originates, beings of all kinds are propelled into the world and trapped in the ceaseless cycle of death and rebirth. In the Buddhists' view, the life of beings in this never-ending cycle is suffering, and salvation is achieved by escaping from the cycle and returning to the Centre. In the next chapter, the discussion will focus on this doctrine of Ultimate Return and the axially of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the doctrine is embodied.

4.2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE PROGENITIVE CENTRE

In terms of cosmogenesis, the Centre is seen as the source of creation. In this sense, the Centre is characterised by its active, dynamic virtuality rather than by any static and passive one, its progenitive nature rather than any sterile nature. In Buddhist connotation, the Centre originates all the phenomenal existence of the universe, including the embodiment of space and time, the myriad sentient beings, and even the supreme Buddhas themselves. It represents the primordial Unity, the noumenon, the Principle of all things, the Origin of the universe.¹⁰¹ Regarding etymology, the symbolism can be testified by the Sanskrit word of the Centre -- *nâbhi*, which, as Snodgrass (1985: 21) points out, is derived from the root *nabh*, which means "to expand". Moreover, space is denoted, in Sanskrit, as *dis*, "direction" (*Vedas*; see Mus 1935: 139). Thus, the space that was brought into existence from the Centre will fill the universe in all directions.

As to its corresponding deity, the Centre is identified in Brahmanism as the Brahman who is the origin of the universe. As stated in *Brhadâranayaka Upanisad* (I. 4.10), "[The Brahman] became the all."; and *Maitri Upanisad* (VI. 26), "He maketh his single form to be manifold." (Snodgrass 1985: 22) In Buddhism, the Buddha who proliferates himself to fill the universe is seen as the symbol of the Centre. As declared in *Samyutta Nikâya* (II. 212), "I being one become many, and being many become one." (Snodgrass 1985: 22)

Apart from Buddhism, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre also has echoes in the beliefs of Chinese traditional cosmology in which the Chinese version of cosmogony is defined. According to these beliefs, the universe was originally in an

¹⁰¹ This progenitive connotation is the traditional view of the essence of the Centre which is shared by many traditionalists like Mircea Eliade, A.K. Coomaraswamy, and so on.

undivided and undifferentiated state. Within the universe, there is the Great Unity, the Principle of all things, called T'ai-i (太乙); and the Principal Unity, the first manifestation of T'ai-i, called T'ai-chi (太極). Both are not perceptible, and are identified as the Centre of the universe from whence all multiplicity was created. The cosmogenesis, as revealed in Figure 4.5., is as follows. The motion and rest of the T'ai-chi produces the Yang and Yin, the two cosmic forces. Here, the energy and inertia of the T'ai-chi are roots of each other. By the interaction of the Yin and Yang, the five fundamental elements of the universe -- Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth -- are brought forth into existence. By the fusion of the Two Forces and the Five Elements, Heaven and Earth are produced. Here, Heaven and Earth are characterised by maleness and femaleness respectively. By the union of Heaven and Earth, multiplicity is brought forth into existence.

In Taoist interpretation (see the chapter 42 of *Tao-te ching*), *t'ai-i* equates with *tao* (道, "Way"), which means Non-being, characterised by its limitlessness and namelessness, and being the mysterious source of everything; and *tai-chi* equates with "the One", which is denoted as Being, the supreme Ultimate. Both are not perceptible, and are identified as the Progenitive Centre of the universe. Heaven and Earth are termed "the Two"; and Heaven, Earth, and Man, are named "the Three".¹⁰² The totality of existence is termed "the ten thousand things". The process of cosmogenesis, as disclosed in the chapter forty of *Tao-te ching*, is as follows:

"The *tao* gives birth to the One, the One gives birth to the Two, the Two give birth to the Three, the Three give birth to the ten thousand things." (Meyer 1992: 73)

¹⁰² Man does not refer here to the ordinary man, but the "True Man". The characteristic of the True Man, as Snodgrass (1990: 333) points out, is that: "Whereas the ordinary man has only actualised some of the peripheral potentialities of his humanity and participates more fully in those qualities belonging to the side of Earth than in those that pertain to Heaven, the True Man has fully realised all the possibilities of the human state of existence and participates equally in Heaven and Earth, ..."

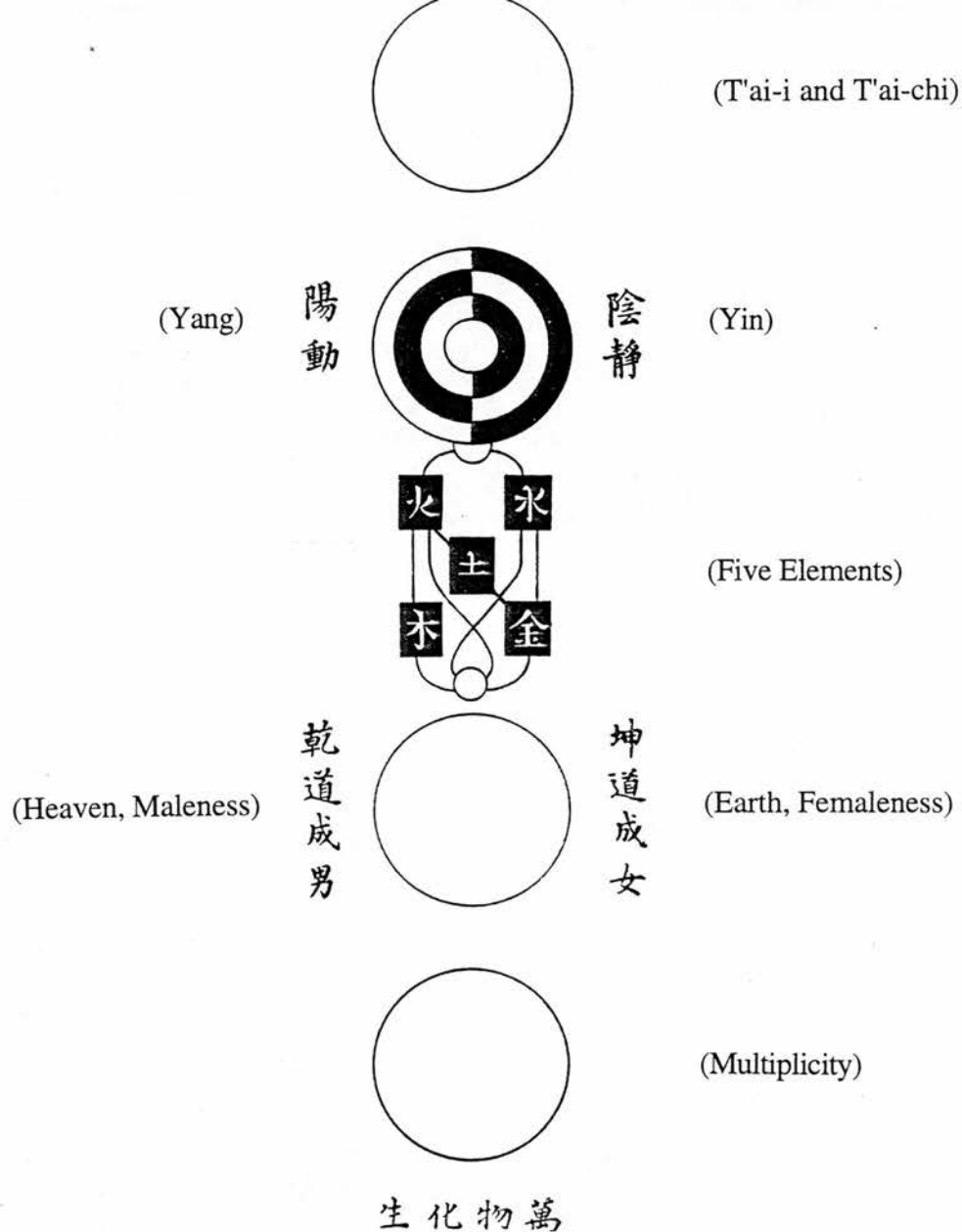


Figure 4.5. T'ai-chi-tu, "Diagram of T'ai-chi" (Needham 1956: 461)

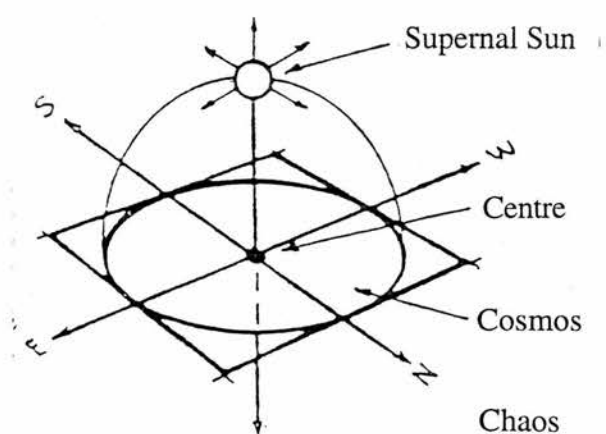


Figure 4.6. The Sun emanating myriad solar rays throughout the cosmos (Snodgrass 1990: 57)

In cosmology, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre is also correlated with that of the Sun. The Sun, which proliferates itself to fill the universe by emanating myriad solar rays, is also regarded as the source of the universe, or the Centre (Figure 4.6.). This symbolism possesses a Brahmanist tradition. In the Brahmanist concept, all myriad beings are progeny of the Sun and are regarded metaphysically as the myriad solar rays. This interpretation is reinforced in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (VIII. 7.1.16): "For progeny indeed is all the light"; and in the same sutra (I. 9.3.10): "[The Sun's rays] are his son and animate being is filiated from the Sun."; and in *Jaiminîya Upanisad Brâhmana* (II. 9.10): "they are the solar rays, and true sons of the Sun."

Moreover, in Brahmanist ideas, the endless emanation of rays from the sun does not exhaust the integrity of the Sun. In its essence, the Sun remains unaltered as a whole One. As asserted in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (X. 5.2.16), "Inasmuch as he is that [Sun] in the world, he is one, and inasmuch as he is numerously divided here on earth among living beings, he is manifold." In this symbolic context, the Sun is referred to as the Cosmic Intelligence and the solar rays is the Intellectual Knowledge (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1973: 4. 216). In this sense, the Sun is regarded as the Cosmic Eye of the mundane world (*cabkhumâ-loke*); it is able to "survey the whole world" and "see all things simultaneously" (*Rig Veda* I. 164.44; see Snodgrass 1985: 24). In sum, the Sun is seen as a symbol of the Centre. As indicated in *Atharva Veda* (XIII. 2.3), "Thou alone, O Sun, art born about the whole world"; and *Rig Veda* (VIII. 58.2), "only one Sun is present to one and all."

In Buddhism, the correlation of the Centre with the Sun can be testified to by the legend of the Buddha. As revealed in *Buddhacarita* (I. 28), the birth of the Buddha symbolises the ascension of the Sun from which the solar rays are emanating all over the world. Moreover, the legend that the Buddha leaps to the top of a tree in the form of the golden bird, refers to the same symbolism (Przyluski 1930: 457f). In legend,

the Buddha, or the Centre, is identified as the Kinsman of the Sun (*Adhicca-bandhu*) (see *Sutta-nipâta* I. 599). In terms of spiritual path, this Sun is also regarded as the Cosmic Exit of the mundane world through which the sentient beings escape from the Wheel of Transmigration (Snodgrass 1985: 268-9).

In Tantrism, the Progenitive Centre is symbolised as the Great Sun. This Sun is not the ordinary sun we see everyday. When it ascends to the Centre of the universe, it will station itself there perpetually, transcending the limitations of space and time. Furthermore, the corresponding deity of the Great Sun is the Buddha Mahāvairocana. Being stationed permanently at the hub of the world, the Buddha, or the Great Sun, is conceived of as shining in all places and for all time and is the source of the Womb-World Mandala (Figure 4.7.; Cf. Figure 2.21.). The symbolism is testified to in the first work (*Subhâkarasimha*) of the Tantric Buddhist master *Shan-wu-wei* (善無畏, "Virtuous and Fearless") as follows:

"Whereas the light of the physical sun is partite, shining in the daytime but not at night, the light of the Sun of wisdom shines brilliantly in all places and at all times... and everywhere throughout the Dharma World. The Great Sun cannot truly be likened to the physical sun except by analogy; the physical sun is subject to the limitation of the causality, whereas the Great Sun is wholly transcendent. Therefore it is called the Great Sun, Mahāvairocana." (Snodgrass 1985: 25)

In conclusion, the Great Sun is, as Perry (1971: 317f) points out, "the symbol of the supreme Principle, the transcendent Centre of the universe". Moreover, the Buddha Mahāvairoca, or the supreme Tathâgata, is also seen as the origin of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from whom they are brought forth by the myriad solar rays of the Great Sun and to which they all return.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ As the origin to which all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas return, the supreme *Tathâgata* is identified with the Solar Body of Fruition (See Snodgrass 1985: 25). I shall discuss the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon from the Centre later in 4.5.



Figure 4.7. Buddha Mahāvairocana stationed in the hub of the Womb World Mandala (Snodgrass 1985: 91)

In anthropomorphic terms,¹⁰⁴ the Progenitive Centre is identified by the Ch'an school as the human heart. According to *Ch'üan-T'ang wen* (全唐文) (441. 3a-7b), the temple halls of Fu-hsing-ssû (福興寺), built in A.D. 761, are organised harmoniously according to the positions of the human organs and their relative importance. As shown in Figure 4.8., the Centre of the temple (the Great Buddha Hall) is located at the position of the human heart. As to the rest of the buildings, the dwelling quarters correspond to the human back, the platform is, as it were, at the head, the rooms at the feet, the corridors at the arms which are to the north, and the gatehouse at the hands which are to the south (Ho 1992: 312). A similar arrangement, as indicated in *Zenrin shôkisen* (禪林象器箋), can also be found in a Japanese Buddhist temple. As shown in Figure 4.9., the centre of the temple -- the Great Buddha Hall -- is situated at the human heart. The Dharma Hall is sited at the human head, the refectory and living quarters at the right and left arms, the gatehouse at the private part of the human body, and the bath house and the treasury at the right and left feet (Liu 1986: 84 and Ho 1992: 312).

In microcosmic terms, the Progenitive Centre is regarded as the Buddha-nature which is embedded within the innermost recesses of the human mind. The identification is also advocated by the Meditation school. According to its doctrine, the aim of religious cultivation is to awaken the Buddha-nature which represents not only the source of cosmogenesis, the fundamental unity of all differences and particulars of the world, but also the final goal of the spiritual journey (see above 2.4.1.). Furthermore, this Buddha-nature, as mentioned above, resides within the human mind; and, in Chinese etymology, mind is a synonym with the word *hsin* (心), meaning "heart", which in turn echoes the anthropomorphic symbolism of the Centre.

¹⁰⁴ The reason for including the anthropomorphic analogy in the discussion is that, in the traditionalists' view, the human is also seen as a microcosm which provides a passage to be "travelled" spiritually between Heaven and Earth; and the human body is exactly the arena of this spiritual communication.

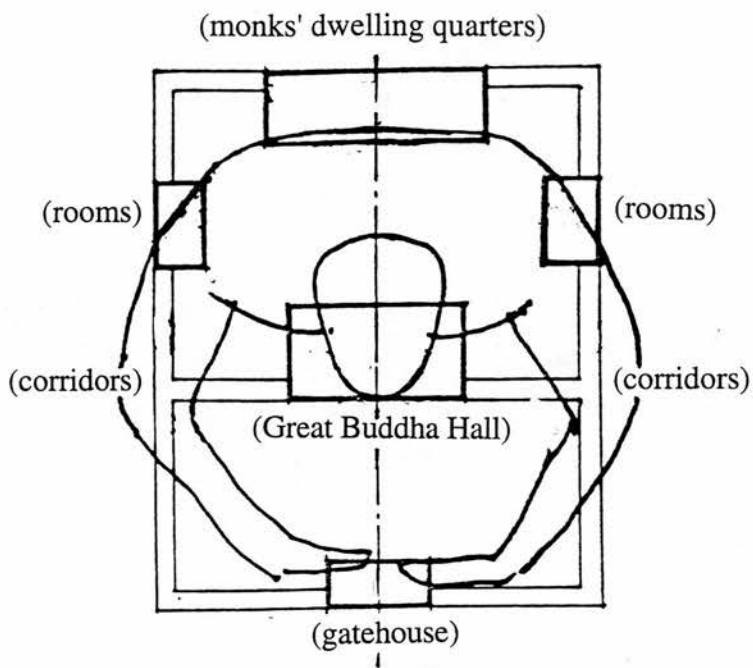


Figure 4.8. Anthropomorphic symbolism of Fu-hsing-ssû (Ho: 1992: 312)

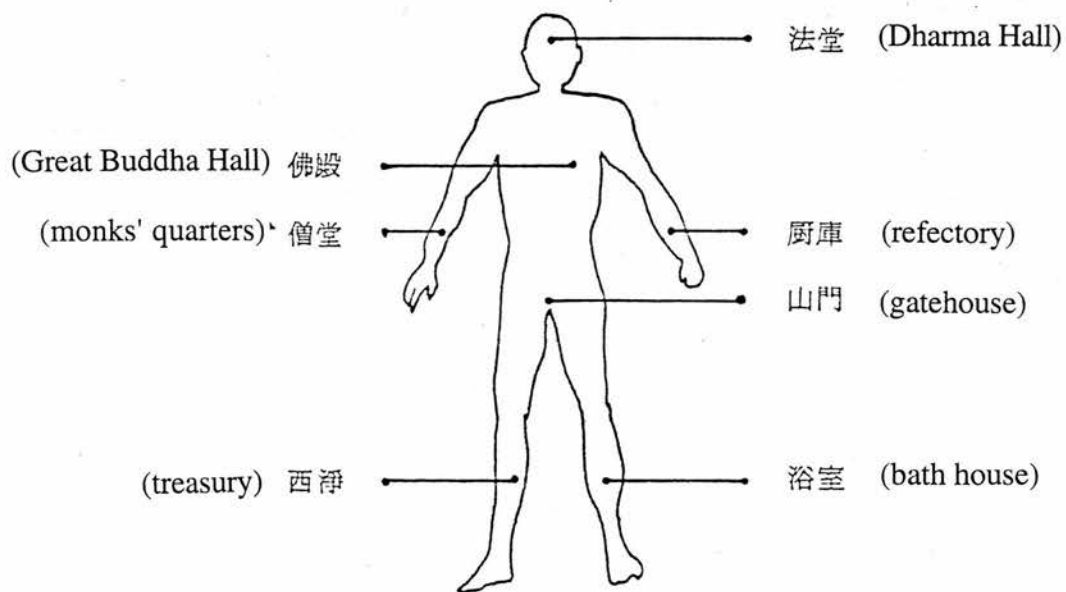


Figure 4.9. Conceptual diagram of anthropomorphic symbolism of Buddhist temple (Liu 1986: 84)

In summary, the Centre, as interpreted by Ch'an Buddhists, denotes the Buddha-nature, and the Buddha-nature resides in the human mind which refers synonymously to the heart. In this way, the etymological meaning of the heart testifies to the symbolism.

To sum up, as far as cosmogenesis is concerned, the Centre symbolises the source of creation. In Brahmanism, this Centre is represented by the creator-god -- the Brahman -- who is the origin of the universe. For Buddhism, which does not acknowledge the creator-god (See above 2.2.2.), the Buddha, who possesses the power of the proliferation of the Buddhist pantheon to fill the universe (See below 4.5.), is regarded as the symbol of the Centre.

In the Chinese perception of cosmogenesis, the Centre as a source of creation is identified as the T'ai-i (太 乙, "Great Unity"), from whence all multiplicity is created. T'ai-chi (太 極, "Principal Unity"), its first manifestation, begets the Two Cosmic Forces (Yin and Yang) and the Five Elements (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth). By the fusion of the Forces and the Elements, Heaven and Earth are produced; and by the union of Heaven and Earth, myriad beings are brought forth into existence. In Taoist interpretation, the Centre, or T'ai-i, is identified as *tao* (道, "Way"); and the multiplicity is denoted in terms of numbers -- T'ai-chi is equated with the One, and Heaven and Earth are represented by the Two; Heaven, Earth, and Man, are called the Three; and the totality of existence is termed the ten thousand things.

From the cosmological point of view, the Sun, which proliferates itself to fill the universe by emanating the myriad solar rays, metaphysically represents the Centre. Being the source of the universe, the endless emanation of rays from the Sun does not exhaust its integrity. In Buddhism, many legends of the Buddha are linked to the solar symbolism. For example, the birth of the Buddha symbolises the ascension of the Sun

from which the solar rays emanate all over the world (*Buddhacarita* I. 28). In the doctrine of the Tantric school, the corresponding deity of the Sun is the Buddha Mahāvairocana, from whom the Dharma-World Mandala issued (See below 4.4.).

In the doctrine of the Ch'an school, the human heart, in terms of anthropomorphism, is employed to represent the Centre. Here, the Ch'an master, on the basis of the nature of each building in the temple premises, locates buildings at the corresponding positions of human organs. Of these buildings, the Centre of the temple -- the Great Buddha Hall -- occupies the position of the human heart. In this connection, the Centre is represented by the human heart in anthropomorphic terms. Moreover, in microcosmic terms, the Centre is considered as the Buddha nature which is embedded within the innermost recesses of every human being. To the Ch'an Buddhists, the Buddha nature is the source of salvation, and the aim of the school is to awaken that nature so as to attain Enlightenment. From the discussion above, we may see that the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, although it is interpreted differently by Buddhism, its origin (Brahmanism), traditional Chinese philosophies, and Chinese Buddhism and its schools, reveals the ultimate Truth that this Centre is the origin of the universe and the source of salvation.

4.3. THE ORIENTATION OF THE TEMPLE COMPOUND

The Buddhist temple compound, as mentioned above, is situated at the cardinal crossroads. As far as the temple aspect is concerned, most of the Indian Buddhist monuments possess an eastern, or northern, aspect. As the Chinese monk Fa-hsien (法顯) in his pilgrimage to India records (Prip-moller 1937: 6),

"The elder Hsü Ta built a shrine on the west side of the road. On the east elevation of the shrine he made the door...." (*Fo-kuo chi* 14b)

"The great garden enclosure of the shrine had two gates, one to the east and one to the north..." (*Fo-kuo chi* 16a)

"In front of the pagoda is one of Buddha's foot prints. Here a shrine is erected with its door towards the north and facing the pagoda...." (*Fo-kuo chi* 23a-b)

In India, apart from the temple aspect, the significance of the East is also testified by the location of *caitya-vrksa*.¹⁰⁵ As another Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang (玄奘) points out, they are situated to the East of the towns and temples (Beal 1906: 172). In Eastern Turkistan which is located in the middle of the Silk Route, Buddhist temples were oriented towards the east or the north. For example, in the cave temple at Bāzāklik,

"half of the rocks utilized for the purpose face due east while the other half, due to a rectangular bend of the valley, face due north" (Prip-moller 1937: 7).

Judging from the evidence mentioned above, the principle of the eastern and northern aspect was introduced to China via the Silk Route during the early spread of Buddhism.

In the case of the Chinese Buddhist temple, in keeping with the tradition which had governed the design of the traditional Chinese house and palace for centuries, the southern orientation continued to take precedence: the temple compound usually faces south. Departure from this norm only occurred in places where the conditions of the building site made it impossible or unfelicitous (Prip-moller 1937: 6-7), or possibly where influences from its Indian precedents were stronger.¹⁰⁶ The favouring of the South in traditional Chinese architecture is based on the belief that the South is

¹⁰⁵ The *caitya-vrksa*, or Tree-Caitya, as Snodgrass (1985: 154) points out, is "the Bodhi Tree enclosed within a fence or wall in the manner of an hypaethral sanctuary". Moreover, it is also an appropriate symbol of the Buddha in his absence (see Auboyer 1949: 73).

¹⁰⁶ There are a few instances in which temples are orientated towards the other three cardinal directions. For example, Ta-cheng-chueh-ssû in Peking faces due East; Shang-hua-yen-ssû and Hsia-hua-yen-ssû in Ta-tung-fu both due East; Fo-kuang-ssû in Wu-t'ai-shan due West; Yung-lo-ssû near Tai-yüan-fu in Shansi province due North.

auspicious because it symbolises the bright side of light and life (For details, see below 4.3.2.). However, as we have seen in discussion of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, all the cardinal directions have ample religious significance. In this section, therefore, the exploration focuses not only on the symbolism of the Progenitive Centre (the temple compound) and its four cardinal bearings but also on that of each individual cardinal direction.

4.3.1. The Progenitive Centre and its four cardinal bearings

Within the temple premises, the four cardinal directions are often manifested in terms of gates. Therefore, apart from the main entrance which faces due South, gates with such nomenclature as *hsi-men* (西門, "Western Gate"), or *pei-men* (北門, "Northern Gate") are frequently mentioned in historical documents, such as *Ssû-t'achi* (寺塔記, "Records of temples and pagodas"). The symbolism behind this name of the gates is the idea of a centrifugal force fanning out from the Progenitive Centre of the temple towards the four cardinal points of the compass, which symbolises the process of the cosmogenesis (Snodgrass 1985: 69). As Paul Wheatley (1971: 435) points out, gates located at either of the four cardinal points symbolise a spiritual landmark

"generated at the axis, flowed out from the confines of the ceremonial complex..., diffusing outwards towards the cardinal points of the compass in a perpetually recurrent mimesis of the primordial cosmogenetic process."

In Buddhism, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre and its four cardinal bearings is referred to throughout its literature, but it is in the legend of the Buddha Sâkyamuni that it is expounded most fully. Here, the Buddha who proliferates himself to fill space in all directions is considered as the symbol of the Progenitive Centre. In

each of his legendary actions, he is repeatedly mentioned as the pivot of the four quarters, the origin of the universe. In the following paragraphs, I shall examine these legends of the Buddha's life, in order to reveal in turn the symbolism of the Progenitive Centre and its four cardinal bearings.

Before his birth, the Buddha's mother Mâyâ conceived the Buddha in a dream where she saw her son in the form of a white elephant entering her womb (See above 2.2.1.). While she was pregnant, Regents of the Four Quarters appeared, lifted her to the top of the mountain, and placed her beneath a Bodhi Tree. In Buddhist interpretation, the Bodhi Tree symbolises the Centre, or the central axis of the universe; and the four guardian regents, who escorted the Buddha Mother to the Centre, represent the four cardinal directions. At his birth, these four guardian gods reappeared to receive the infant in a golden net; and the location of the net has been well chosen by the Buddha before his descent into the world. The sacred birth-place, which as Warren (1922: 41) points out, is centrally located among towns, hills and rivers in the eight directions, the so-called "Middle Country". In Buddhist connotation, the location reveals again the characteristics of the Centre that this "Middle country", or the Centre, is active and progenitive, and that from it space radiates and the world is formed.

As the legend goes on to tell, the Buddha shortly after he was born was placed upon the ground. Subsequently, he stood up and contemplated the world in the ten cosmic directions -- the four cardinal points, the four intermediates, the Nadir and the Zenith. When he found out there was no one in this world equal to him, he took the "seven" steps and declared, "I am the summit of the world, I am the best in the world, I am the eldest in the world" (*Majjhima Nikâya* III. 123 and *Jâtaka* I. 53; see Mus: 1935: 483). In Buddhist connotation, the number "seven" refers to the six cosmic directions of space, namely, the four cardinal points, the Nadir and the Zenith, and the

Centre from which they are deployed. That is to say, after his perusal of the six directions, the Buddha finally reached the Centre of the world on his seventh step where he announced his supremacy over the universe.

When the Buddha grew up, he once took part in an archery competition to win his bride Yasodhara. In the contest, according to the *Jâtakas* (III. 372), four banana-tree trunks were set up in four corners of the courtyard and the Buddha

"fastened a thread to the feathered end of the arrow, aimed at and struck one of the trees; the arrow penetrated it, and then the second, third and fourth in succession and finally the first again, which had already been pierced, and so returned to his hand, while the trees stood encircled by the thread".

The four trunks at the four corners of the courtyard represent again the four cardinal directions respectively. The arrow here symbolises *sûnya*, emptiness, and *nairatma*, impersonality; and the penetration of the arrow, which "smote the enemy, depravity, and pierced the net of heretical views" (*Jâtakas* I. 58; see Coomaraswamy 1943b: 117. 45), symbolises the attainment of Enlightenment.

After the Buddha attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, the Awakened One took a seven week (forty nine days) "retreat" within the circle of the Tree of Awakening. According to the legend, in the first week, he remained seated and motionless, realising the bliss of *nirvâna*; and in the second, he stood upright, gazing with unblinking eyes at the Bodhi Tree. In the following three weeks, he visited each of the four cardinal points of the world. The journey commenced from the Centre to the South. From there, the Buddha travelled clockwise around the world. That is to say, he travelled from the South via the West and the North, and finally arrived at the East. After the journey, he returned from the East back to the Centre and entered into meditation again.¹⁰⁷ The journey, as Snodgrass (1985: 42) describes, is as follows:

¹⁰⁷ The itinerary is testified to in the description by the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang of the Buddha's promenade, *cankrama* (Coomaraswamy 1927: 32): "To the North of the Bodhi Tree is the place where the Buddha walked. When the Buddha had attained full Awakening he did not rise from his

"He rises into the air to convince the spirits of his attainment; he paces to and fro along a cloistered path running from East to West and extending from the throne beneath the Tree to the place of the steadfast gazing, tracing the diurnal path of the sun that 'measures out' the worlds, extending them out from the centre and then retracing that path, retracing them into the centre Tree."

During the final two weeks of the journey, a battle begins between the Buddha and the evil Mâra, who has challenged the throne of Wisdom that the Buddha occupied after the Enlightenment, started. As soon as the Buddha wins a victory over the Mâra,

"a furious storm rages, and the serpent king Mucalinda, emerging from his underground lair at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, wraps him about with his coils and extends his hood to shelter his head" (Snodgrass 1985: 42).

The victorious battle of the Buddha, as Snodgrass (1985: 42-3) goes on to describe, is as follows:

"Starting from the Centre of the universe, the Tree, he ascends to the supernal worlds; then he encompasses the four directions of space; and finally he descends into the underworlds by being fully enwrapped by the coils of the chthonic serpent. He has traversed the six directions of the universe: the zenith, the four directions on the horizontal plane, and the nadir, recomposing them within the centre, which is himself."

The arena of the sacred voyage and the victorious battle of the Buddha, as Viennot (1954: 180) points out, is within the precinct of *bodhimanda* which is referred to by *Lalita Vistara* (XXIV) as the "three thousand thousands of worlds". Therefore, in contrast to the seven step's itinerary, as stated early, which achieves the sovereignty of the Buddha, the perambulations pacing along paths in all the cosmic directions throughout the "three thousand thousands of worlds" can be interpreted as the Buddha's dominion over the total extent of the universe. According to *Buddhacarita* (XV.III), the legendary event, which indicates his taking possession of the world, can also be testified to in the ritual of the Cakravartin's consecration (*abhiseka*), in which

seat but remained there for seven days in meditation. When he rose he went to the North of the Bodhi Tree and walked for seven days, coming and going from East to West, on a space of about ten paces. Extraordinary flowers, eighteen in number, appeared at the places of his footsteps. Later a brick platform, about three feet high, was erected on this spot." (Beal 1906: 122 f)

the Buddha is anointed with waters taken from the four seas; moreover, the legend has it that the Buddha bathed in the four oceans prior to his unblinking gazing at the Bodhi Tree.

On the forty-ninth day of his retreat, the Buddha was offered food by two merchants who were passing. Having seen that the Buddha had no bowl to receive their offering, the Regents of the Four Quarters appeared again and each presented a bowl to the Buddha (Figure 4.10.). The Buddha then placed these four bowls one into the other. In this "single bowl" which shows four lines around its rim, i.e. the four rims, the Buddha received the food. In Buddhist connotation, the four bowls represent the space of the four cardinal directions respectively; the unification of the bowls symbolises that the space of the four directions is reconcentrated within the Centre whence it radiated.

After the accomplishment of his seven-week retreat, the Buddha carried out a religious mission, preaching Buddhism to all sentient beings. On delivering a lecture, he replied to an enquiry of his disciple Ānanda about the ceremonies to be performed at his death that: "after the cremation, my bones should receive the honours that have traditionally befitted a universal monarch, that is to say, that a *stûpa* be erected over my remains 'at the crossing of four highways'" (*Dîgha Nikâya* XVI. 5). In Buddhist connotation, the *stûpa* at the crossing represents the Centre; and the four highways symbolise the space of the four cardinal directions.

Testimony to the spatial import of the crossing can also be found in an allegory in chapter three of *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (*Saddharma-pundarika sûtra*):

"... a wealthy merchant whose house burst into flames while his children were playing within. To bring them to safety he calls to them that there are three carts outside, drawn by a ram, a deer and an ox, and urges them to come out and ride upon them. By this expedient the



Figure 4.10. The offering of the four bowls by the Regents of the Four Quarters (Snodgrass 1985: 43)

children were enticed to leave the blazing building and were saved."
(Snodgrass: 1985: 37)

"The children came out safely and seated themselves in the open space,
or *âkâse*, at the crossroads." (Kern 1963: 72ff)

This allegory conveys the belief that ignorant men (represented by the children) are saved from suffering and illusion (the flame) of the world of *samsâra* (the burning house) by the expedient (the Buddha's teachings). The Buddhist teachings here referred to are the doctrines of the Three Vehicles, represented by the ram, deer and ox carts. As to the religious import of this spatial imaging, the roads of the four cardinal directions symbolise the Four Noble Truths; the open space at the crossroads, which is also the place where the *stûpa* of the Buddha is located, symbolises the spaceless space at the axle point of a wheel and the *locus* of Liberation. Therefore, when ignorant men, or the children, arrive and are seated at the open space of the crossroads, they have reached the very heart of the Truth, or the Centre. To sum up, as is revealed by the legend of the Buddha and the allegory stated above, the four cardinal directions are closely related in spatial organisation with the Centre, and each of the spatial points -- the Centre and its radiated four cardinal points -- possesses an ample religious import.

As associated with the legend of the Buddha, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre is also revealed in traditional Chinese beliefs in which the Emperor of a kingdom is regarded as the Progenitive Centre of the world. In the hierarchical system of Chinese cosmology, the status of the Emperor is classified as Man,¹⁰⁸ the Son of Heaven, as well as Earth. He is the manifestation of *t'ien-tao* (天道, "Way of Heaven") and *ti-tao* (地道, "Way of Earth").

¹⁰⁸ Emperor here is seen as a collective noun which includes king and his family, both alive and deceased (see 2.1.1).

Being an *axis mundi*, the Emperor is stationed at the Centre of Earth where the celestial and terrestrial world communicates. As disclosed in *Mencius* (孟子) (VII. A. xxi 2), "[The emperor] stands in the centre of the earth"; and his role is to "stabilise the people within the four seas..." (cf. Wheatley 1971: 431). He is thus seen as positioned at the pivot of the four quarters. As testified in *Chou-li* (周禮),

"The sovereign alone constitutes the realm; he determines the four quarters and fixes the principal positions. He creates the ministers and distinguishes their functions, so as to form the administrative centre of the people." (Perry 1928: 54)

Furthermore, as revealed in *Wen-wang yu-sheng* (文王有諝),

"The ruler... established his city at Feng... the King's work was splendid; The walls of Feng were where the cardinal directions conjoined (that is, at the axis of the world); The royal Ruler was their support; The royal Ruler was splendid indeed." (Wheatley 1971: 430)

In this view, the empire the emperor governs is characterised as a kingdom of cosmic order. As far as the palace compound is concerned, the building in which he resides is considered the Progenitive Centre of the world. The space of the capital, province, and even the whole kingdom is organised extending out from his palace compound, or the Centre, towards the four cardinal directions.

In traditional Chinese architecture, the Chinese Buddhist temple, as mentioned above, is one instance which evolved from the principles of both Indian and traditional Chinese architecture. In keeping with both those traditions, the temple compound where the Lord of Buddhism -- the Buddha -- resided and worshipped is regarded as the Centre of the world. Extrapolating from the legendary events of the Buddha's life and the supreme status of the Chinese emperor, the Chinese Buddhist temple compound is considered as the Progenitive Centre of the world from which space is oriented in accordance with the four cardinal directions.

4.3.2. The North and the South

Of the four cardinal directions, the North is in Brahmanism identified as the "End of the Year", or the winter. Proceeding beyond the North, or the End of the Year, Heaven is reached. As asserted in *Jaiminîya Upanisad Brâhmana* (I. 35), "The two ends of the year are winter and spring"; and (IV. 15.1.), "I will tell thee that, which knowing, ye perceive the door of the world of heaven and having successfully come unhurt to the end of the year [the winter], shall speedily attain the world of heaven". Here, the North is represented as the "Door of Heaven". In this view, as indicated in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (X. 2.6.4.), "it is thus the immortal that lies beyond this (Year, Prajâpati, temporal existence)". (Snodgrass 1985: 269 & 273) As adapted by the Buddhists, the North symbolises the "End of the World". By passing through the North, or the End of the World, the devotee achieves the state of *nirvâna*. The Buddha was "headed North" (*uttara-sîso*) at his *parinirvâna* (*Dîgha Nikâya* II. 137; Snodgrass 1985: 273). As disclosed in *Anguttara Nikâya* (II. 48-50), "There is no surcease from sorrow until world's end (*loka-nirodha*) is reached." In this view, the North is the auspicious cardinal direction symbolising the Centre where the devotee suffers no sorrow.

Here, from the geographical point of view, the identification of the North with the Centre seems to contradict the position of the Centre which was identified metaphysically with the mid-noon Sun stationed permanently at the zenith, or the apex of the celestial sphere. However, if seen from the celestial sphere's point of view, the pole of the earth revolves physically around an axis which is oblique to the pole of the sun, as shown in Figure 4.11. As a result, the zenith will shift and reside approximately at the position of the Pole Star in the northern sky. In this way, the metaphysical Sun, or the Centre, resides at the same location as the North. For the Chinese, the northern Pole Star is also the place where the Governor of Heaven

Stationary Sun :

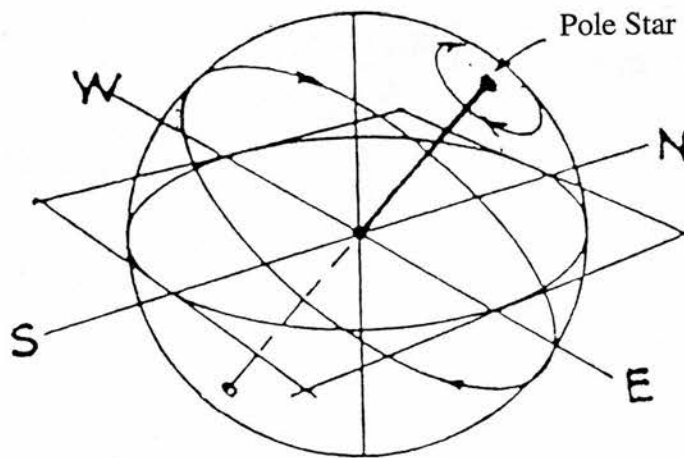
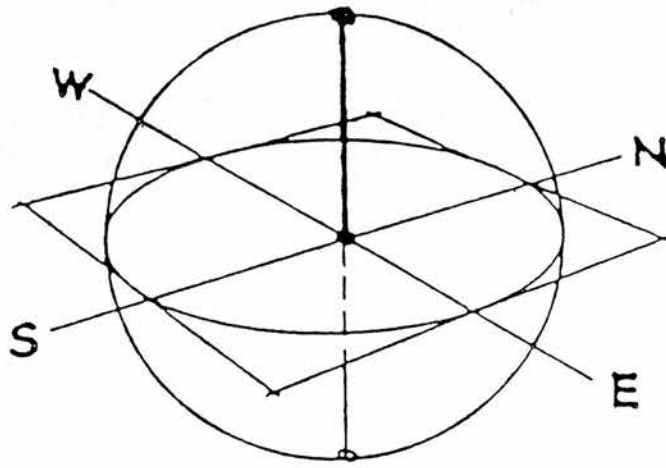


Figure 4.11. Comparative positions of the Sun and the Pole Star
(Snodgrass 1990: 123)

(Shang-ti 上帝, "Lord-on-High") resides. In Chinese belief, he lives in the Palace of the Northern Pole Star pivoting the celestial world throughout the four quarters (Snodgrass 1990: 338). In sum, the North is seen as the most auspicious cardinal point of the four and accordingly regarded as the Centre.

As to the South, the Chinese consider the South as the side of light and life. This belief is based on the annual cycle of seasons, so that the North, or the projection of the Pole Star on the terrestrial world, is regarded as the point of the winter solstice and of less light, and the South is that of the summer solstice and of more light. In this view, the North is regarded as the side of darkness and death. In ritual ceremony, the significance of the bright South is revealed in the performance of the rite. As indicated in *I-ching* (易經) (app. V. 4.9):

"for *li* [the trigram located in the south in the King Wen arrangement of the trigrams] gives the idea of brightness... the sages turn their faces to the south when they give audience to all under the sky, administering government toward the region of brightness." (Frothingham 1917: 65)

Moreover, as addressed in *Li-chi* (禮記) (IX. 1.14),

"A ruler stood with his face toward the south to show that he would be [in his sphere] what the influence of light and heat was [in nature]. His ministers stood with their faces to the north, so as to face him." (Snodgrass 1990: 385)

In terms of Chinese cosmology, the South is also identified as the side of maximum *yang*, which is literally "the male"; and the North is the side of maximum *yin*, which is literally "the female". Here, *yang* and *yin* equate with Heaven and Earth (*Huai-nan-tzu* 淮南子 VII. 2), which were brought forth into existence by the T'ai-chi, the principal Unity or the Progenitive Centre (Cf. above 4.2.).

In short, the South correlates symbolically with the summer solstice, the bright side of light and life, the *yang*, the male, and Heaven, whereas the North is the winter solstice, the depressing side of darkness and death, the *yin*, the female, and Earth.

Therefore, the ideal aspect of Chinese architecture is to face due South to embrace the bright side of light and life, or greet good fortune, with the back of the building to the North to leave the depressing side of darkness and death behind, or to ward off the evil influences coming from that direction. In keeping with the Chinese tradition, the majority of Chinese Buddhist temples face due South.

From the exploration above, it seems that, in Indian and Chinese cultures, both North and South are auspicious cardinal directions. In fact, if seen in terms of the spatial symbolism of the celestial and terrestrial orders, they are two complementary sides of one Truth. As far as the celestial order is concerned, the North is regarded as the Door of Heaven, the final destination of the ascending sun in Brahmanism, the End of the World in Buddhism, and the Pole Star in the northern sky as the Centre of the celestial world in traditional Chinese beliefs, whereas, in terrestrial terms, the North, identified with the winter solstice, is the season of winter and the side of the least light, the lowest point of the terrestrial cycle. By inference, the South, encompassing the summer solstice, is the season of summer and the side of bright light, the highest point of the cycle. Therefore, as Snodgrass (1985: 271-2) points out,

"The symbolism is applied at two levels: the march of the sun belongs to the [celestial order], while the succession of the seasons belongs to the [terrestrial order], and following the general law of symbolic analogy the correlation of two different levels entails an inversion of relation, so that what is highest in the celestial realm becomes the lowest in the terrestrial, and vice versa."

On the whole, in terms of the celestial order, the highest point of the cycle is the North; and in terms of the terrestrial order, the highest point of the cycle is located in the South. Both cardinal points represent the highest goal of beings, and both are auspicious. They are indeed the two sides of the one Truth.

4.3.3. The East and the West

As to the symbolism of the East and the West, the East where the sun rises, symbolises light and life, whereas the West where the sun sets represents darkness and death. In symbolic representations, the significance of the auspicious East is often represented by a supreme deity. In the Vedic tradition, Agni, or "God of Fire", is regarded as the deity of light stationed in the East at dawn. He sunders the darkness of night and sustains the world. Moreover, another deity, Indra, who rides in the eight-wheeled chariot of the Sun is also identified as the guardian of the East, the direction of beginnings.¹⁰⁹

In Buddhism, the Buddha Sâkymuni is the deity who verifies the significance of the East. The verification is revealed in his legendary seven-week retreat within the "Circle of the Tree of Awakening", or the "Wheel of the World", after his attainment of the Enlightenment. During the period of the third, fourth, and fifth weeks, the Buddha journeyed clockwise around the Wheel of the World. The itinerary commenced at the Centre, the Tree of Awakening, and proceeded towards the South. According to the legend, the moment when the Buddha stepped on to the southern cardinal point and faced due North, the southern part of the world sank immediately into the lowest hell, and the northern side rose up to the highest heaven. The same thing happened when the Buddha stood on the second and third stops -- the West and the North, and faced due East and South.

It was not until the Buddha arrived at the last stop, the East, and faced the West, that the world remained stable where "all Buddhas have sat crosslegged, and that side neither tremble nor quakes" (Warren 1922: 76). The Buddha then said, "This

¹⁰⁹ The rest of the guardians of the cardinal directions are Yâma, Varuna, and Kuvera (Kramrisch 1947: 198).

is the immovable spot on which all the Buddhas have planted themselves" (Ibid., 83). Subsequently, he returned to the Centre and ascended the Diamond Throne, *vajrâsana*, at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, facing due East. Thus, the East is regarded as more auspicious than the West, where all Buddhas are stationed, and from where the shaky world is secured.

Moreover, as the legend goes on to describe, during the period of the sixth and seventh weeks, when the Mâra challenged the Buddha's position upon the Diamond Throne, or "Throne of Wisdom", the Buddha called upon Earth to witness his virtue, and finally won victory over the Mâra. The winning battle over the Mâra, as Warren (1922: 83) describes,

"was achieved before the setting of the sun, and as darkness pervaded the world [the Buddha] concentrated his mind and began a meditational ascent of the world's axis, rising to over higher planes of insight and understanding until, at daybreak, he attained perfect Enlightenment, bursting in total Freedom from the apex of the world."

According to the legend, it was not until sunrise that the Buddha won the battle. In other words, the winning time is dawn. The myriad solar rays, which are regarded as a column of light, or "Pillar of the Dawn" (See below 6.2.), return the brightness to Earth. In terms of cardinal points, the sunrise is related to the East. Moreover, the place where the Buddha defeated the Mâra is located at the apex of the world, which, in relationship with the sunrise, is also identified as the East (Snodgrass 1985: 41). The East here symbolises the sacred victory of the Buddha over the evil Mâra.

With regards to Chinese cosmology, the East symbolises the side of spring, of *yang*, of sunrise, of increasing light, of renewal; whereas the West represents the side of autumn, of *yin*, of sunset, of decreasing light, of decline. The symbolism of the East as the side of spring and the West, that of autumn, is revealed in the spatial organisation of the palace complex. For the Chinese, the worship of ancestors takes place in spring. Therefore, the ancestral temple, or *tsung-miao* (宗廟), as shown in

Figure 4.12., is placed at the East, to the left side of the imperial palace. Furthermore, the worship of the Earthly deity for securing good harvests is held in autumn. The temple of the Earthly deity, or *she* (社), is located at the West, to the right side of the palace (see above 2.3.1.).

In addition, in Taoist belief, the East is regarded as the place of honour in ordinary life; and the West, the place of honour in war. While facing due south,¹¹⁰ the left side of the emperor is the East, and the right side is the West. The symbolism is expressed in the processional route of officials to the palace. As Meyer (1976: 48-9) points out,

"The civil officials entered the palace from the east and at the great audiences stood to the left or eastern side of the south-facing Emperor, the military officials entered from the west and stood to the Emperor's right, the western side. (Cited in Snodgrass 1990: 388-9)

To sum up, as Lao-tze, the founder of Taoism, asserts: "In ordinary life a gentleman regards the left side as the place of honour; in war, the right side is the place of honour." (*Tao-te ching* 31; Wu 1961: 45). Moreover, as Meyer (1976: 71-2) points out,

"Standing to the left of the south-facing Emperor the civil officials occupied the side of honour and of *yang*; the military officials, standing to the Emperor's right, occupied the lesser position, that of *yin* ." (Cited in Snodgrass 1990: 389)

In sum, due to the diurnal course of the sun rising from the East and setting in the West, the East symbolises the sunrise, increasing light, *yang*, spring, and renewal, while the West, the direction of sunset, symbolises decreasing light, *yin*, autumn, and decline. In this view, the East is more auspicious than the West. The significance of the East and the West in the Chinese Buddhist temple is revealed in the grouping of

¹¹⁰ As has been stated in the previous section, for the Chinese, the southern orientation is the most auspicious direction of the four.

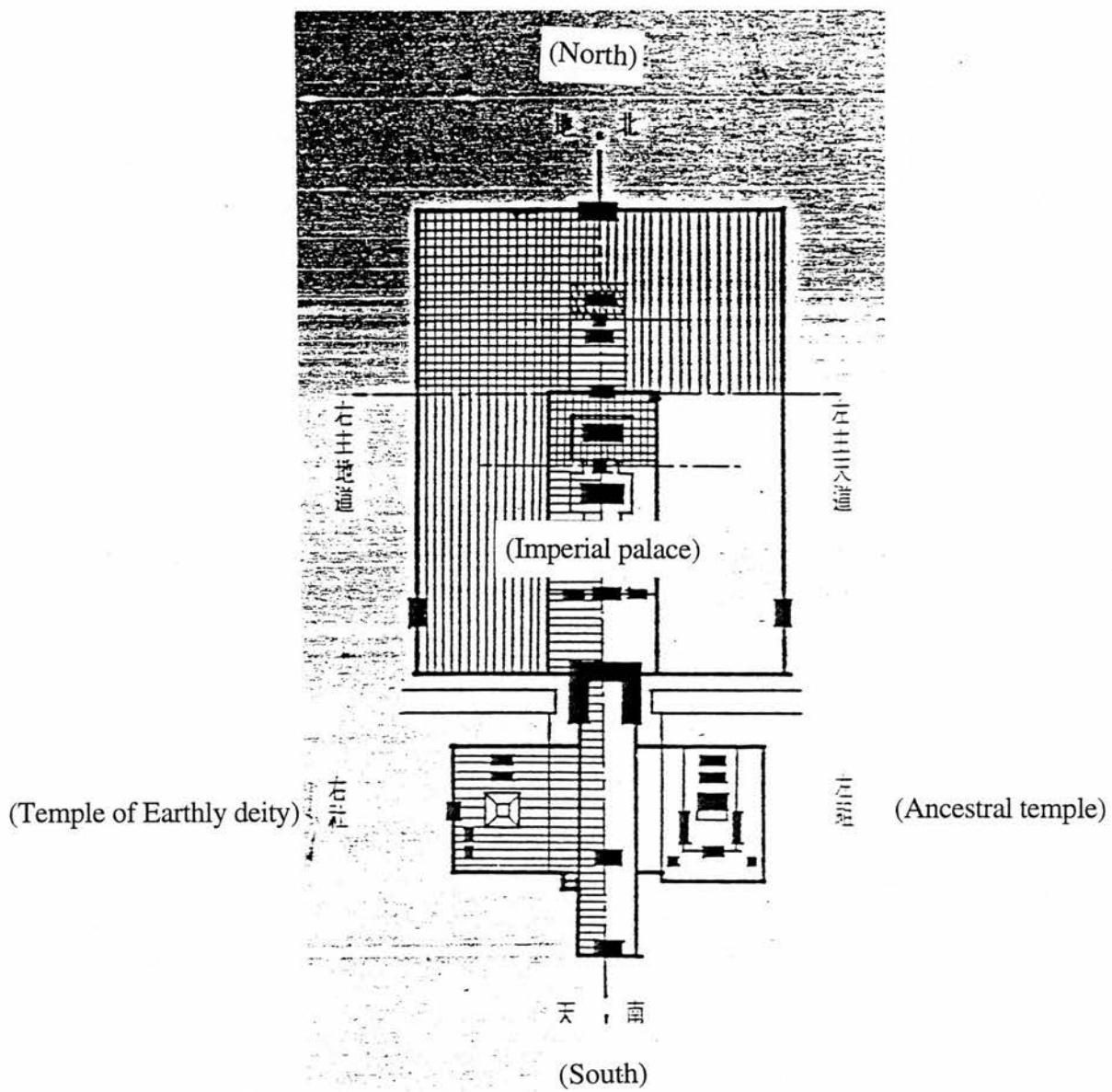


Figure 4.12. General layout of Chinese imperial palace (Ch'eng 1991: 21)

monks in assembly, and the spatial organisation of the abbot's quarter which I shall discuss in the following paragraphs.

Normally, the assembly of monks in the refectory and Great Buddha Hall is grouped into East and West divisions. As regards the East and West monk groups in the refectory, the division is mentioned in the biography of the monk Hui-i (慧義) in a description of a gathering of monks for the cremation of a prestigious fellow monk (ca. 5th century). The abbot in charge "called the master of the dining hall to arrange the East and West parties" (*Kao-sêng chuan* 高僧傳: 13. 17b). The same arrangement applies when monks assembled in the Great Buddha Hall for ritual ceremonies. These are the two places in the Chinese Buddhist temple where the assembled monks are divided in terms of the East and the West (Prip-moller 1937: 98). While grouping, the East party is located on the left hand side of the central figure -- the abbot in the refectory or the Buddha in the Great Buddha Hall -- and the West, on the right. This spatial organisation is because the majority of Chinese Buddhist temples have a southern orientation.

In Ch'an temples, the division of monks into East and West parties is also employed in the meditation hall where they carry out the meditation ceremony. This physical activity, which forms the beginning of the ceremony, takes place in the central area of the meditation hall where special columns and beams are built (Cf. above Figure 3.33.), for monks to circle around. Before the ceremony, monks are first grouped into two concentric circles by the abbot in charge. The inner circle is formed by the monks of the East party whose seats, or *k'angs* (炕),¹¹¹ are located at the left hand side of the hall, and the outer one is composed by the monks of the West

¹¹¹ *K'ang* is a wooden platform where monks practise meditation. When the meditation hour starts, monks all sit in the meditative pose with the hands folded and legs crossed on these benches. Normally, separated by huge curtains, there are wooden beds behind the *k'ang* where monks who live in the hall sleep.

party whose seats are on the right. Apart from the columns and beams, white square slabs which are laid into the floor are sometimes employed to facilitate the grouping, as illustrated in Figure 4.13. In performance, the monks keep a steadily increasing pace, and march the circle in both clockwise and counter-clockwise ways. The marching direction for both groups is instructed by the abbot as well. After the exercise, the monks return to their seats and start to meditate.¹¹²

In addition, in the division of the monk assembly, the East party is normally assigned to attend the worship and the West party given practical activities. In fact, though, this is not always the case. For example, according to Meyer (1992: 86), the Western party of monks often consisted of "the higher ranks and older, more experienced monks, who had so successfully subdued their passions through years of meditation that they were sometimes called 'old papayas'" (Cf. Welsh 1967: 37-8). According to Reichelt (1934: 258), during meals, "Those who belong to general administration and the guest department stand on the West side (the side of honour) and those of the meditation section on the East".

Furthermore, the significance of the East and the West in architectural terms is expressed in the spatial organisation of the abbot's quarter, or *fang-chang* (方丈) -- literally the Chinese measurement of ten-cubit square.¹¹³ In the building complex, the

¹¹² In the Chinese Buddhist temple, only monks who have just been ordained reside and meditate in the hall. Normally, they enter the hall shortly after ordination and stay there at least six months. The aim of the whole meditation ceremony is, firstly, to keep novices under discipline by the bodily exercises from which the orderliness of the Sangha may be achieved, and, secondly and most importantly, is to enter into the realm of meditation where monks are fully absorbed in spiritual self-control and concentrate on reaching the goal where one sees Buddha, "not as a distant personality, but as myself in my final redemption" (Prip-moller 1937: 223).

¹¹³ Apart from the abbots' abode, the term *fang-chang* can also be employed to represent the abbot himself, and the Buddhist temple. For the abbot meaning, testimony can be found in an inscription carved in a stela dated ca. A.D. 520. The stela shows a relief of a square plan Chinese house with two men sitting inside it. The accompanying inscription reads, "Vimalakirti in his ten-cubit square house ..." Moreover, the Chinese envoy Wang Hsüan-tse from the T'ang court, who visited India for three or four times, had the opportunity to look into the measurement of the Vimalakirti's house (ca. A.D. 666). For lack of tools, he measured with his *hu*, which is the Chinese official audience tablet to be held, vertically with both hands in front of the breast, by the official who entered into the presence of the emperor, proving that the dimension of the house was exactly *fang-chang*, the Chinese

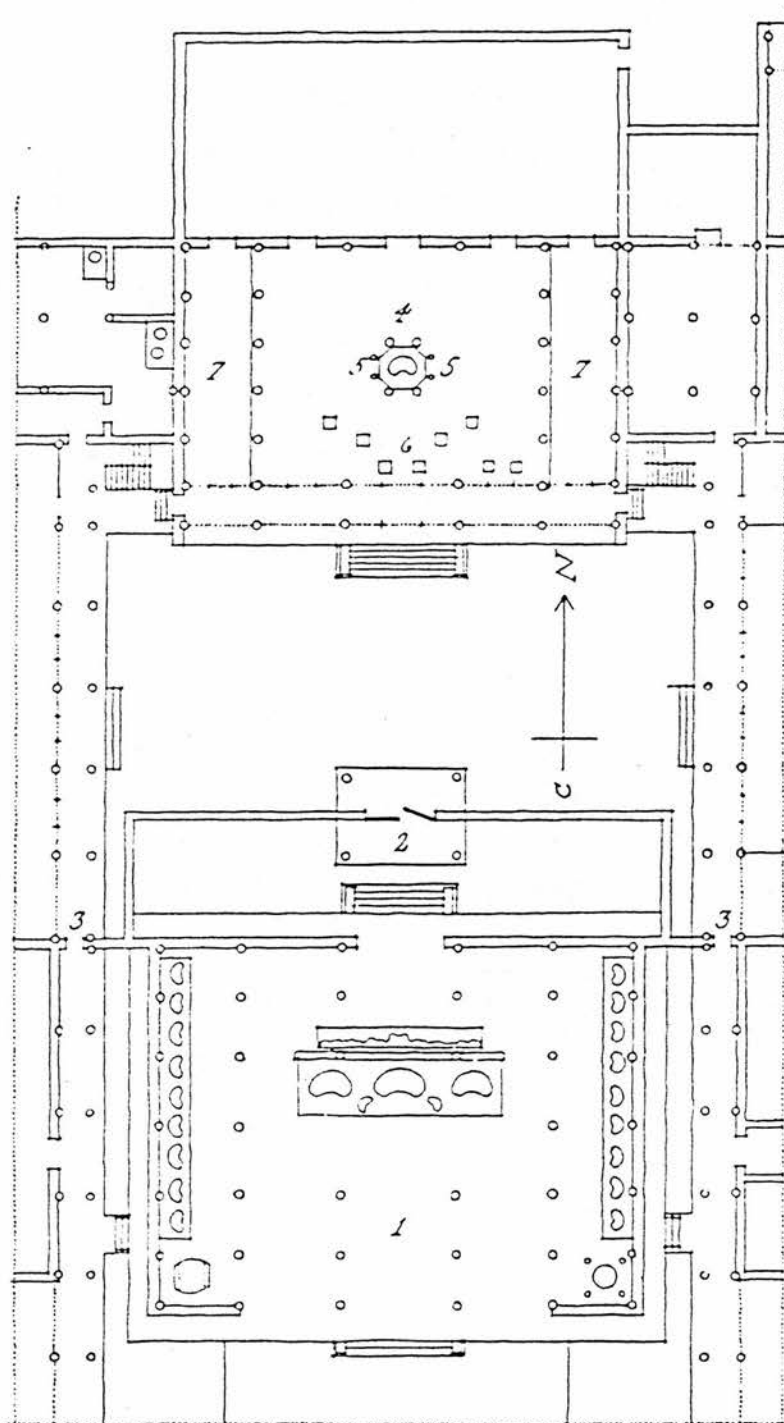


Figure 4.13. Plan of meditation hall, P'i-lu-ssû, Nanking (Prip-moller 1937: 67)
 1. Great Buddha Hall, 2. gate, 3. side gates, 4. meditation hall,
 5. concentration columns, 6. white slabs in floor,
 7. monk's seats (*k'angs*).

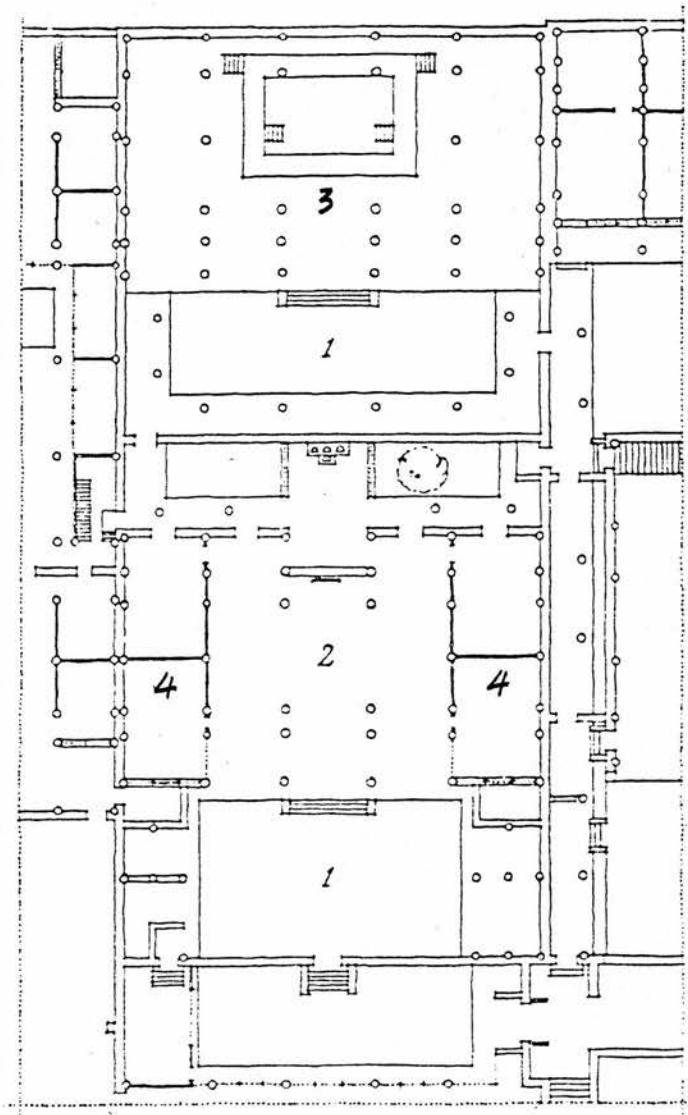


Figure 4.14. Location of abbots' quarter, Ku-ning-ssû, Nanking
 (Prip-moller 1937: 89)
 1. courts, 2. Dharma Hall, 3. ordination hall, 4. abbots' quarter.

quarter is divided into two zones, namely, *tung-hsi fang-chang* (東西方丈 "East and West Abbots' Quarter"), and is placed near the Dharma Hall in order to reveal the authority of abbots when they preach the Dharma, as shown in Figure 4.14. Because of the precedence of the East over the West, the East quarter is occupied by the abbot in office; whereas the West one is for abbots in retirement.

4.4. THE MANDALA MANIFESTATION

Within the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the *mandala* formula is manifested in aspects of the spatial organisation of the building complex as is the theophany of deity. The most obvious example of this is the way in which individual buildings and Buddhist images are located at the cardinal points; the former can be seen in the Diamond Throne Pagoda (*Chin-kang-pao-tso-t'a*). The general scheme of the pagoda, as has been described in 3.3.2., consists of a group of five pagodas built on a raised square platform. Theoretically, these five pagodas, based on the doctrine of the mandala, are to be arranged with one located in the centre and the others disposed along the axes in cardinal directions. Practically, the four surrounding pagodas were shifted to the corners of the square in order to provide an access to the central pagoda. In Buddhist connotation, this change does not consume the validity of the *mandala* symbolism, as shown in Figure 4.15. As to the latter, evidences of this *mandala* formula can often be found in paintings. Expressed in terms of both the

measurement of ten-cubit square. By association, the term *fang-chang* is employed to represent the abbot Vimalakirti as well. The sutra basis of the abbot Vimalakirti is the *Wei-mo-chieh so-shuo ching* (N 146), which records a long discourse between the Buddha and Vimalakirti, Wei-mo-chieh in Chinese. As to the Buddhist temple, testimony can be found in *Wen-hsüan* ("General Anthology of Prose and Verse", A.D. 530), as follows: "Wang Chin, a supervising censor of the Northern Wei dynasty, who was dismissed from office about the middle of the fifth century on account of leniency and who seems to have become a follower of the Buddhist faith, wrote a treatise on the inscription of a Buddhist temple after he had retired. In this he states that in the year A.D. 461, the roof of *fang-chang* was repaired in order to protect the images and sutras" (P.W. Yetts 1932: III. 45f). Here, the term *fang-chang* was employed to signify a Buddhist temple.

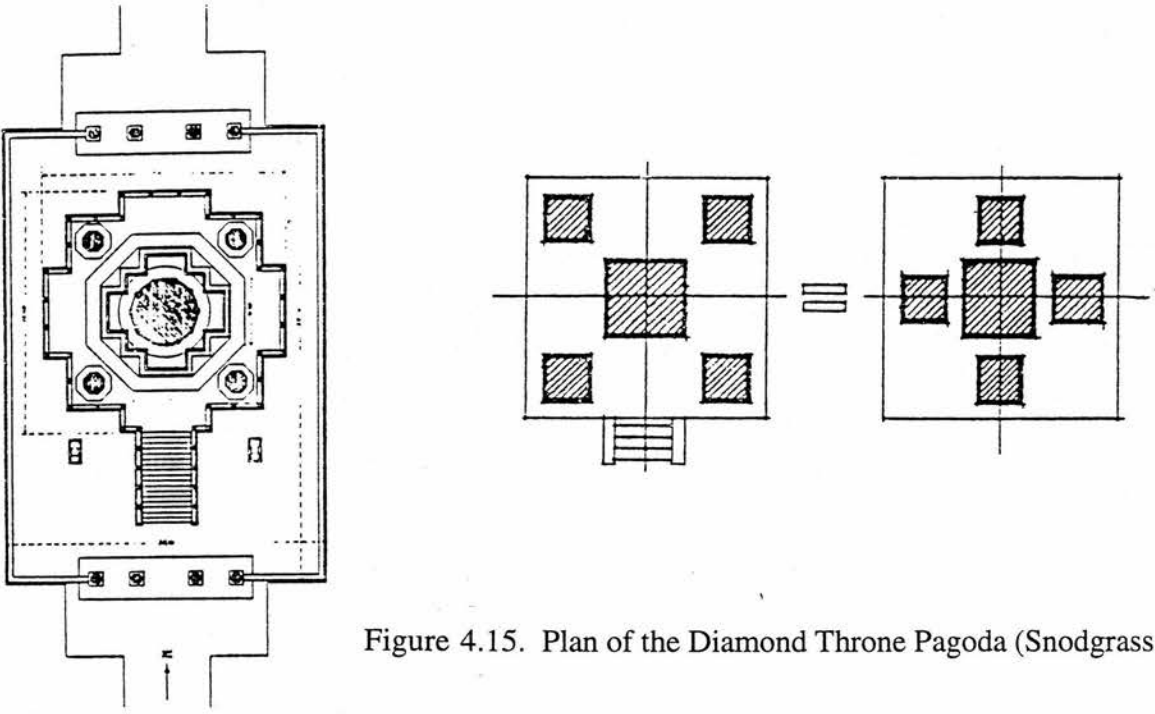


Figure 4.15. Plan of the Diamond Throne Pagoda (Snodgrass 1985: 127)

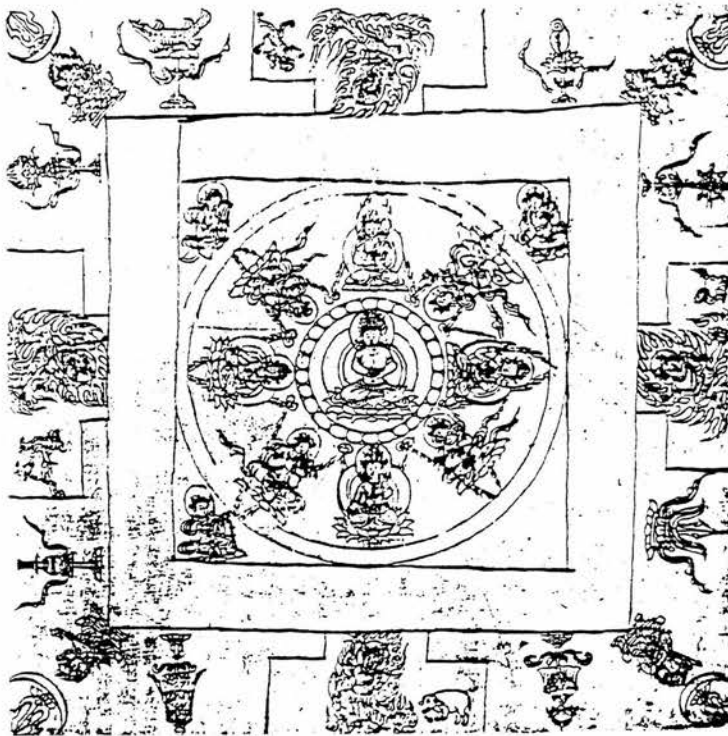


Figure 4.16. Mandala expressed in terms of images, Tun-huang cave temple (Hashida 1980: 183)

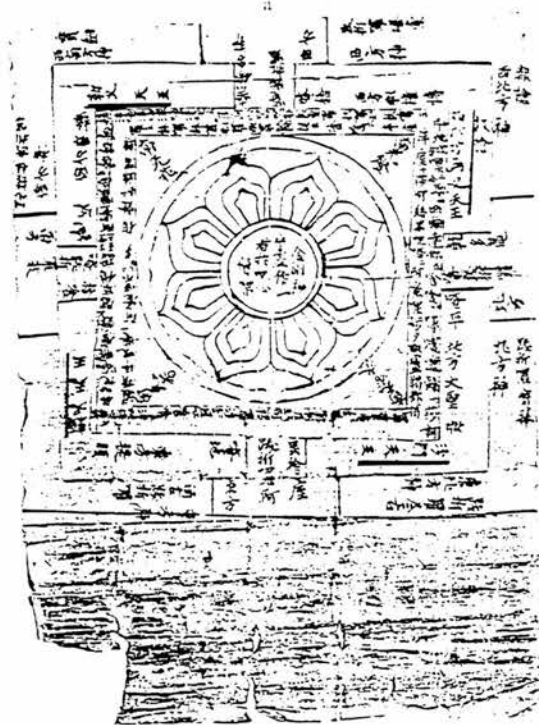


Figure 4.17. Mandala expressed in terms of the nomenclature of Buddhist deities, Tun-huang cave temple (Hashida 1980: 176)

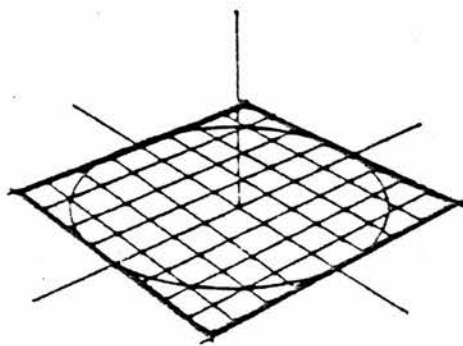


Figure 4.18. Conceptual diagram of *mandala* (Snodgrass 1985: 104)

images and nomenclature of Buddhist deities, Figures 4.16. and 4.17. are two examples of this found in the Tun-huang cave temple.

Basically, the *mandala* is a religious doctrine originating from the Indian Tantrism and preached by the Chinese Tantric school (See above 2.5.5.). In morphology, *mandala* is manifested as a circle contained within a square, as shown in Figure 4.18. In the Tantric view, the circle symbolises the Centre and the square represents the world of order formed from that of chaos. The spatial pattern is regarded as a sacred manifestation in which religious ceremonies take place. As Snodgrass (1985: 104) points out,

"[It is] a world or field from which demonic, which is to say disordered and distracting, influences have been expelled and within which rituals can be performed without hindrance or danger".

In China, the traditional Taoist phrases for the centered ritual space -- *tao-ch'ang* (道場, "Place of the Way"), and *t'an* (壇, "Terrace or Platform") -- are often employed in order to supply the terminology for this. In Tibetan texts, *mandala* is explicitly translated as the "Centre" (Eliade 1958: 219).

In terms of its internal structure, the sacred precinct, or the square, is covered by the invisible perpendicular lines which are oriented strictly towards the cardinal directions (See above Figure 4.18). In this way, the *mandala* is developed into a chessboard-like structure constituted by many small squares. In Buddhist ideas, each of these small squares is presided over by a Buddha, or a *bodhisattva*. The paradigm of the assembly reflects the theophany of the Buddhist kingdom (Cf. 2.5.5. The Tantric school). In theory, the *mandala* can either be one whole square with no perpendicular lines crossing it, or accommodate an unlimited number of small squares

simply by multiplying itself in an arithmetical series.¹¹⁴ In practice, the largest number of squares in a *mandala*, as Snodgrass (1985: 108) points out, amounted to as much as 1, 024 (32 x 32). That is to say, there were altogether 32 types of *mandala* that were brought into use. The selection of a proper type of *mandala* out of a number of alternatives is decided by "the symbolic correspondences with the location and intended use of the temple, the identity of the divinity enshrined, the caste of the donor and a number of other connected factors" (Kramrisch 1946: 58f).

To sum up, the morphology of *mandala* is a circle within a square. The characteristics of the *mandala* representation lies in the circle which signifies the Centre and the perimeter of the square which demarcates the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Moreover, the square is subdivided by invisible perpendicular lines. That is to say, the square is made of many small squares; each of these is ruled by a Buddha, or a *bodhisattva*. In the following paragraph, the discussion will focus on the symbolism of the circle of the *mandala* as the Centre, of the small squares which are inhabited by the Buddhist deities, and of the invisible perpendicular lines that divide the square.

Firstly, with regards to the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the circle of the *mandala* which covers the sites of five pagodas as shown in Figure 4.19. and gives birth to the five Buddhas whom I shall discuss later, symbolises the source of creation. It is the channel of progenitiveness through which the One, the source of creation, flows to the Many (See above 1.2). In Brahmanism, the circle of the *mandala* is regarded as the Golden Womb where the embryo of the world is nourished: the world is brought forth by radiating the "primordial germ of cosmic light" (Kramrisch 1946: 89) from this Womb towards every direction and throughout all time. Adapted

¹¹⁴ For example, a *mandala* with nine small squares, which is commonly used in the Chinese Buddhist temple, is the result of three small squares squared, i.e. $3 \times 3 = 9$.

Figure 4.19. Conceptual diagram -- five pagodas contained in the circle of *mandala* (Snodgrass 1985: 126)

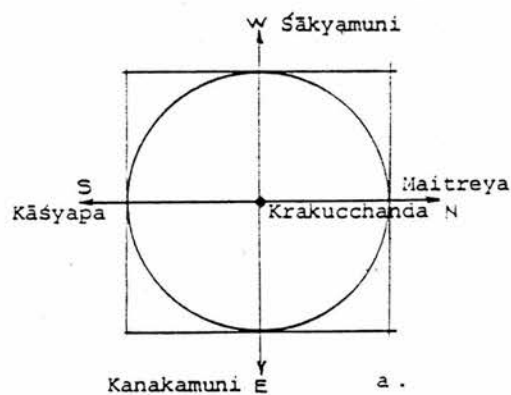
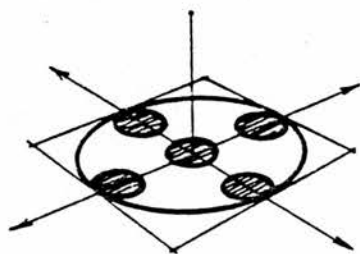


Figure 4.20. The spatial correspondence of the five Buddhas and the cardinal directions (Snodgrass 1985: 132)

Figure 4.21. The spatial correspondence of the five Buddhas and the cardinal directions (Snodgrass 1985: 132)

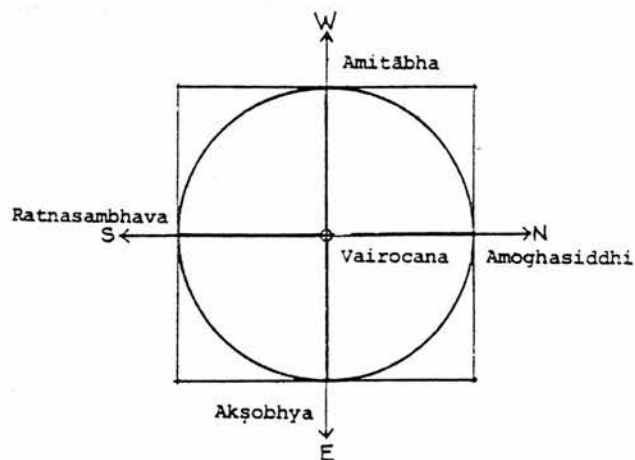
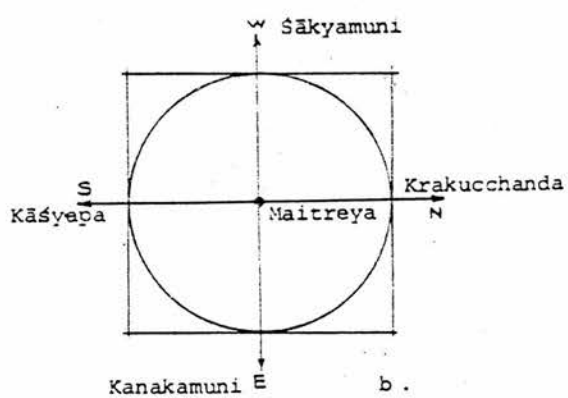


Figure 4.22. The spatial correspondence of the five Buddhas of Victory and the cardinal directions (Snodgrass 1985: 135)

by the Buddhists, the circle of the *mandala* symbolises the Centre from which all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are given birth. This symbolism derives from the belief that the circle of the *mandala* is the field where the seed of Buddhahood grows into the Buddha Tree.

"[Being] planted in the 'earth of the mind', moistened by the water of Great Passion, heated by the sun of Great Wisdom, animated by the air of Great Method, [the seed] grows into the space of the Great Void, and thus develops into the sprout of the Dharma-Nature, which grows outward into the Dharma-World and finally becomes the full-grown Buddha Tree." (*Subhâkarasimha* 625a; Snodgrass 1985: 105)

In essence, the circle of *mandala* is characterised by its completeness and perfection. In Buddhism, this wholeness is interpreted as the totality of Buddhahood which is constituted by

"the various qualities and virtues of the Buddhas and Tathâgatas, just as a wheel is a whole formed by the assemblage of its various parts, its hub, its felly, spokes, etc." (*Bukkyô Daijiten* 1116; Snodgrass 1985: 105)

The description of the circle of the *mandala* as a wheel is in keeping with its etymological significance -- the Sanskrit word *mandala* means "circle" (*yüan* 圓 in Chinese), a symbol of perfection. In this view, the essential part of the *mandala* is made up by an integration of the differentiations of Wisdom which innumerable Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* possess to fulfil its wholeness. In its macrocosmic import, the wholeness of the *mandala* signifies an "all encompassing totality" inseparably merged with the world of form. The order of the *mandala* is regulated by the Dharma Body of Buddha Vairocana (*Subhâkarasimha* 626a. 9). Thus, the circle of the *mandala* symbolises both the Dharma Body of Buddha Vairocana and the ideal configuration of the cosmos of forms.

Moreover, in its microcosmic senses, the circle of the *mandala*, or the completeness and perfection of Buddhahood, is conceived inwardly as a supra-mundane paradigm which abides in the mind of sentient beings. In the connotation of

Ch'an Buddhism, this spiritual paradigm is perceived as the Buddha nature that dwells in the the hub of beings' minds. According to *Dainichikyô* (41b. 18), "By knowing this, the complete fruition [of Buddhahood] is attained". In Buddhism, the deity who achieved the complete fruition is the Mind of the Great Being, Mahâsattva. In short, within the manifestation of the circle of the *mandala*, the perfection of Buddhahood is macrocosmically displayed through the Dharma Body of the Buddha Vairocana over the total cosmos, and microcosmically reflected within the mind of sentient beings.

"When the initiate enters the *mandala* he is ritualistically traversing his inner states; in his innermost mind he is crossing the flood of *samsâra*, tracing his way to the centre of the cosmos, which is the *bodhimanda*, the place where the Buddhas attain Enlightenment." (Snodgrass 1985: 107)

Moreover, the *mandala*, when linked with Buddhist teachings, refers to the five levels of understanding from which the Perfect Enlightenment, or the Buddhahood, is brought forth (*Dainichikyô* 5b. 26). The symbolism is based on the belief that there is the Dharma-Nature (*dharmatâ*), lying within the mind of beings, where it remains "uncoagulated" and "unformed" because of illusion. When awakened by the progressive levels of understanding, or the *mandala*, the devotee attains the state of *nirvâna*. The five levels of understanding, advocated by the T'ien-t'ai school, are regarded as the five stages of the Buddhist teaching that the Buddha preached, namely, the *Avatamsaka sūtra*, the *Agama sūtra*, the *Vaipulya sūtra*, the *Prajñā sūtra*, and the *Saddharma-pundarīka sūtra* and *Mahā-parinirvāna sūtra* (See above 2.5.3.). In this view, the *mandala* represents

"a schema of the progressive stages in the ascent of the Way to Buddhahood, the way that leads from the Awakening of the seed of *bodhicitta* up to the full perception of Method, or *upāya*, the activity of the Buddha whereby all beings are aided to gain a perception of the Real" (Snodgrass 1985: 105).

In sum, the *mandala* represents not only the Progenitive Centre of the Buddha and Bodhisattva, but also of the final Enlightenment.

As to the theophany of the small squares of the *mandala*, each of the squares, as mentioned above, is presided over by a deity. In Buddhist terms, these deities were invited by ritual to descend into the squares, and the position of them in the squares corresponds to their religious status. The appearance of the assembly as a whole symbolises the whole supramundane Buddhist kingdom. This manifestation supports the idea that the *mandala* is the origin of creation from which all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were brought forth. In this connection, the Buddhist kingdom is regarded as the square of the *mandala*. In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre and its cardinal significance, this square, or the kingdom, is divided four-fold by the cardinal axes crossing at its centre. The theophany in the *mandala* is thus manifested by a series of the five Buddhas who dwell in and rule over the Centre and four cardinal points of space. In architectural symbolism, each of the five Buddhas is represented by a pagoda of the five-pagoda cluster.

In Buddhist ideas, there is a variety of combinations of the quinary Buddhas. In the schema which operates in terms of two coordinates of the universe -- space and time, the five Buddhas who govern the world of the present *mâhakalpa*. are the Buddha Krakucchanda who rules over the Centre, Kanakamuni the East, Kâsyapa the South, Sâkyamuni the West, and Maitrêya the North, as shown in Figure 4.20. (Mus 1935: 75)¹¹⁵. Frequently, a correspondent quinary which swaps the position of Krakucchanda with that of Maitrêya is found, owing to the popularity of the Maitrêya cult. In this case, Maitrêya is the king of the Centre, and Krakucchanda, that of the North, as shown in Figure 4.21.

¹¹⁵ In this world era, the Buddhas Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kâsyapa, are said to appear before the arrival of the Buddha Sâkyamuni. In addition to these existing Buddhas, Maitrêya, the Buddha who is to come, is also given as part of this group, thus forming a group of five Buddhas of the present aeon. As to the Buddhas of the past or future world era, there is scarcely a Buddhist document testifying to their presence and nomenclature. Occasionally, there are textual references mentioning a representation of seven or eight Buddhas of a past world aeon (Bénisti 1971: 149). Each of these Buddha groups as a whole marks the characteristics of the world age.

In the Tantric school, or Mi-tsung, the quinary Buddhas are seen as five Buddhas of Victory (*Jina-buddha*) who rule over the Centre and four cardinal points. The location and symbolism of the five Buddhas are, as shown in Figure 4.22., as follows: the central Vairocana symbolises "the Sun"; the Eastern Aksobhya, "the Unshakable"; the Southern Ratnasambhava, the "Jewel Birth"; the Western Amitâbha, the "Infinite Light"; and the Northern Amoghasiddhi, the "Attainment that is not Void" (*Guhasamâja* 90; Tucci 1961: 49; Bhattacharyya 1931: 135-6).¹¹⁶

Within the four quarters and the Centre, the five Buddhas of Victory are considered as the leaders of their own Buddha lands inhabited by innumerable Buddhas. The belief that the Buddha Land is inhabited by a host Buddha and countless other Buddhas is also preached by the Pure Land sect. As indicated in chapter two of *Wu-liang-shou ching* (無量壽經, the Larger *Sukhâvati-vyûha sûtra*), before the Buddha Amitâbha attained Enlightenment, he was shown "the perfection of all the excellences and good qualities of Buddha countries belonging to eighty one hundred thousand *niyûtas* of *kotis* of Buddha ..." (Cowell 1975: 91) in order to strengthen his faith in Liberation. In the *A-mi-t'o ching* (阿彌陀經, the Smaller *Sukhâvati-vyûha sûtra*) (11-6), the name of the host Buddha is given in terms of the cardinal point. The Buddha land in the West is presided over by the Buddha Amitâbha, and the East is governed by the Buddha Aksobhya. The number of Buddhas who reside in the Land is calculated to be as many as the grains of sands in the river Gangâ.

¹¹⁶ In Brahmanism, the five corresponding regents of the five directions are as follows: Agni is the god who governs the East, Varuna governs the West, Tvastr the North, Indra the South, while the centre is given over to Visvakarman, the Architect and Creator, the Maker of all things, whose four faces turn towards the four winds of the world and who is identified with Prajâpati himself and with his cosmo-progenitive activity. In ritual, the matching sacrifices presented to the five regents are as follows: the man to Visvakarman, the horse to Varuna, the ox to Indra, the ram to Tvastr, and the goat to Agni. In Brahmanic ideas, all five gods are emanations of Prajâpati, so the five sacrificial victims are the disjointed portions of Prajâpati's body: the man is Âtman, Prajâpati's Self, the horse is his eye, the ox is his breath, the ram his ear, the goat his voice (Snodgrass 1985: 50).

In this way, the entire universe is filled with "Tathâgates crowned into the whole extension of space, with Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitâbha and Amoghasiddhi at their head" (Bhattacharyya 1931: Intro. 2). Altogether, the virtue of the five Buddhas of Victory -- the Sun, the Unshakable, the Jewel Birth, the Infinite Light, and the Attainment that is not Void -- is regarded as the total Knowledge of the unitary Buddha who in turn gives birth to the five Buddhas. The unitary Buddha who resides in the hub of the World Wheel represents here the transcendent Enlightenment, or the Suchness (*tathatâ*).

In the esoteric doctrine of Tantrism, these five Buddhas are referred to as the five ephemeral constituent aggregates (*skandhas*) of the worldly body. The identification of the five *Jina-buddhas* with five *skandhas* is as follows: the Vairocana Buddha of the Centre represents the personification of form (*rûpa*); the Amoghasiddhi Buddha of the North, that of volition (*samskâra*); the Amitâbha Buddha of the West, discernment (*samjnâ*); the Ratnasambhava Buddha of the South, sensation (*vedanâ*), and the Aksobhya Buddha of the East, consciousness (*viijnâna*). According to this doctrine, the five aggregates are considered the same as the five virtues of the five Buddhas of Victory that constitute the Diamond-Body of the unitary Buddha mentioned above. Each virtue, or the immutable essence, that the Buddha represents is an aspect of the Diamond-Body of Buddha, or the transcendent Enlightenment. In this view, these five Buddhas of Victory, "comprise the two-fold aspect of the *skandhas*, on the one hand their mundane and temporary aspect, which pertains to change, and on the other their supra-mundane and eternal aspect, which pertains to transcendent Buddha Knowledge." (Snodgrass 1985: 137). In sum, as Tucci (1961: 52) points out, "the world of ever-changing phenomena and the Buddha's world of adamant immutability are non-dual" (See also Mus 1935: 439).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ It is taught in the doctrine of the duality of *nirvâna* and *samsâra*. of the non-Tantric school that the immutable essence of all beings only exists in the transcendent realms of *nirvâna*. In other words,

Apart from the five aggregates of the wordly body, the five Buddhas of Victory are also associated with a variety of correspondences, such as, the five types of consciousness, the five senses, the five passions,¹¹⁸ the five colours, the five Elements, and so on. For each correspondent combination, the same principle applies: each constituent of the correspondent combination is represented by a Buddha, signifying an aspect of the Diamond-Body of the Buddha, and all the five constituents, although irreconcilable with each other, are integrated into the transcendent Enlightenment. In some cases, the Regents of the four Quarters whose mission is to protect the Dharma and the border of the Buddhist kingdom, preventing the invasion of evil influence into its sacred domain (Snodgrass 1985: 134) are also employed to represent the deities of the cardinal directions (Sawa 1971: 130). Here, the identification of these "Four Kings" with the corresponding cardinal points is given as follows: Dhrtarâstra in the East, Virûdhaka in the South, Virûpâksa in the West and Vaisravana [or Kuvera] in the North (Figure 4.23.). In iconography, the Regents of the four Quarters are dressed in armour like warriors and are often found depicted in bas-reliefs at the base of pagodas (Combaz 1933: 142).

As far as morphology is concerned, the plan of the *mandala*, as has been stated above, is characteristically divided into a number of smaller squares by crossed perpendicular lines (Figure 4.24.). These criss-crossed lines that subdivide the *mandala* symbolise the lines of Breath (*prâna*) with a macrocosmic and microcosmic significance. Macrocosmically, the body of the world is built by criss-crossed lines of Breath over its ground, connecting the One to the Many, the Many to each other, and all to the One; and microcosmically, the body of the being is formed by a network of

the five aggregates that constitutes the individual being are momentarily changing, lying in the mundane and temporary world of *samsâra*.

¹¹⁸ The five passions, *klesa*, that obscure the mind of beings and hinder the attainment of Enlightenment are here referred to as mental darkness (*moha*), pride (*abhimana*), jealousy (*irsâ*), irascibility (*krodha*), and cupidity (*lobha*) (Tucci 1961: 53).

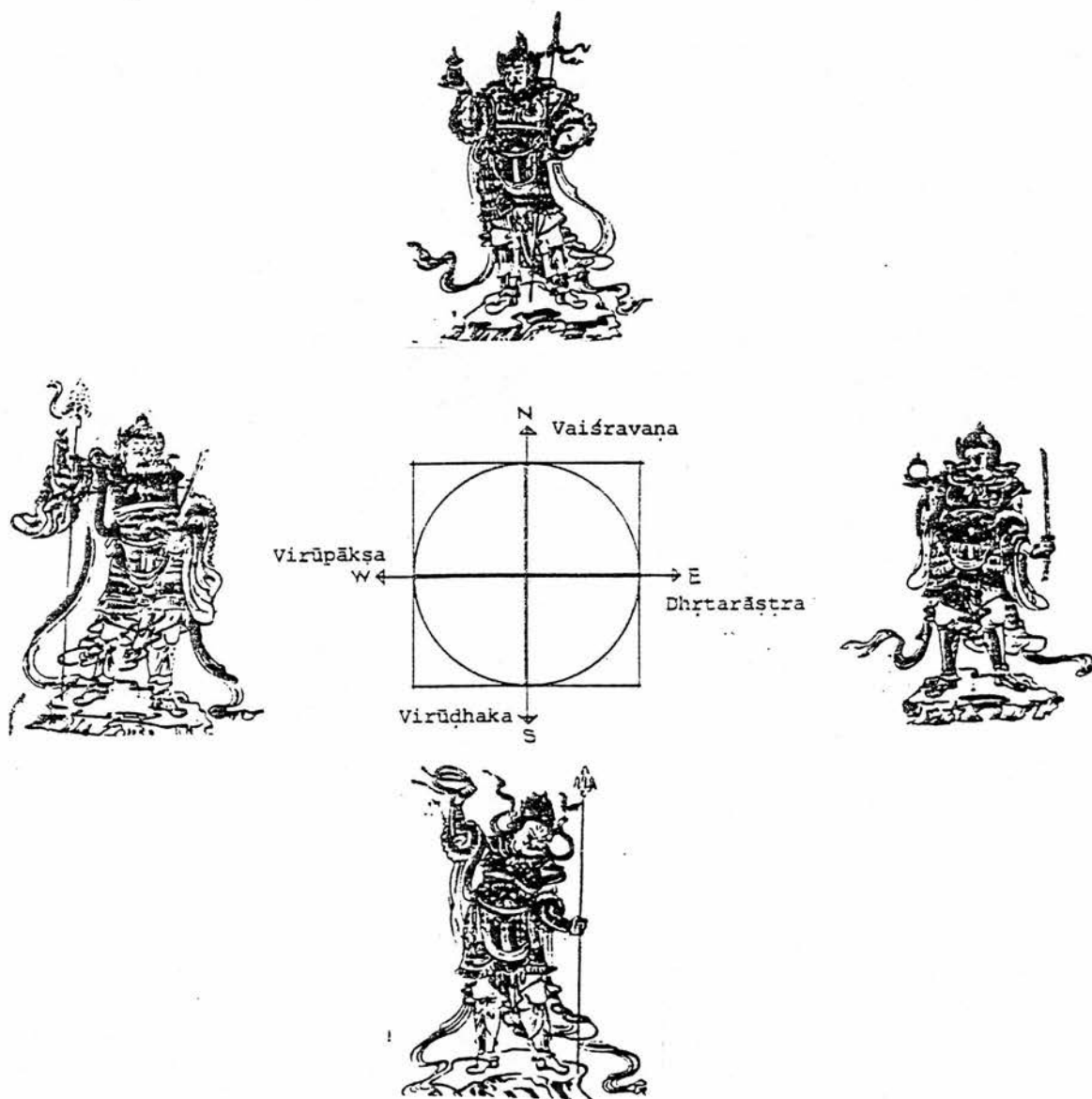


Figure 4.23. The spatial correspondence of the four Kings and the cardinal directions (Snodgrass 1985: 134)

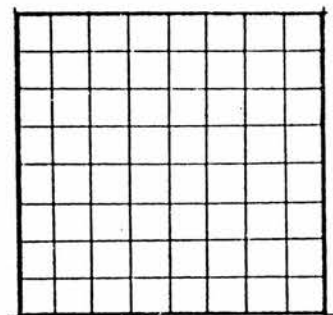


Figure 4.24. Conceptual diagram of *mandala* gridwork (Snodgrass 1985: 111)

subtle, pneumatic arteries (*nâdi*), over his psycho-physical field (Snodgrass 1985: 111f). In short, the Breath lines are systematically replete as a network within the bodies of beings as well as over the whole cosmos. In other words, the bodies of beings and the world are held together by this pneumatic net.

In Brahmanism, the lines of Breath are interpreted as the threads of Wind, or the Spirit of Brahman. Macrocosmically, the field of the cosmos is bound by these Wind-ropes (*Maitri Upanisad* I. 4). Microcosmically, the organs of man are held together by the Wind-cord. As asserted in *Atharva Veda* (X. 8.38), "I know the stretched thread on which these living beings are woven; I know the thread of the thread, and also the great Brahman"; moreover, as defined in *Brhadâraṇyaka Upanisad* (III. 7.2), "Verily, they say of a person who dies that his limbs have been loosened ... for it is the Wind that binds them like a thread." (Snodgrass 1985: 113) In short, according to *Satapatha Brâhmana* (X. 1.4.1), all worlds and all beings are held together as a pneumatic net by the Wind-cord. In Brahmanic thought, nets are scattered throughout the bodies of man and the world by God. As concluded in *Svetâsvatara Upanisads*, "God who, having spread out one net after another, in various ways wanders in the field" (V. 3.7; Snodgrass 1985: 113); in other words, he is "the one who spreads the net, who rules with his ruling powers" (III. 1; Snodgrass 1985: 113).

As adapted by the Buddhists, the lines of Breath (*prâna*), symbolise the threads of Spirit (*sûtrâtmā*). Here, the threads of Spirit, as Coomaraswamy (1977: I. 465) points out, are considered as rays of light which are emitted from the Sun, the symbol of Enlightenment.¹¹⁹ By the projection of the threads of Spirit, or rays of light, into all directions, both the macrocosmic substance of the world and the

¹¹⁹ Here, the thread or ray of attainment is cognate with the vertical axis, equivalent to the Cosmic Tree, Pillar, Ladder or Mountain, which I shall discuss in next chapter.

microcosmic essence of individuality come into existence (Snodgrass 1985: 112 ff). Moreover, it is by means of the Spirit threads, or rays of light, that the microcosm and the macrocosm hold together (Guénon 1962: 365-73). In sum, the lines of Breath (*prâna*) measure out the macrocosmic and microcosmic worlds in both spatial and temporal terms.¹²⁰ The Buddhist deity to whom the doctrine of rays of light is attributed is Bodhisattva Jâlinîprabha known as the "Net of Splendour", who represents a network-like splendour of lights (*Bukkyô Daijiten* 545).

Moreover, the doctrine of the Breath lines correlates with the Buddha's Breath. In Buddhist concepts, the Breath of the Buddha, which is as sonorous as *divya- dundubhi-megha-nirghosa*, or the "Thunderous Sound of the Celestial Drum", is regarded as the sermon of the Buddha, and is also incorporated in the words of the sutras (*ching* 經). This connection between the breath lines and the sermon in words is testified in the etymology of the word *ching*. In Chinese, *ching* literally means warp, but consists of 糸 meaning "Thread" and 𡿨 meaning "A Subterranean Watercourse" -- a hidden stream (Guénon 1945: 19-20; cf. Snodgrass 1985: 112, n. 32). In conclusion, the words of the Buddha, or the Buddha's sermon, are considered as the hidden stream originated from the Buddha, or the Centre.

Within the context of the pneumatic net, the hidden stream, or the Buddha's word, is regarded as a Breath-cord that animates and structures the cosmos (Guénon 1962: 342). Each individual existence is considered as the intersection point of threads, or a knot in the Breath-cord (*sûtrâtman*) (Guénon 1962: 400f). In Brahmanist thinking, which was later adopted by the Buddhists, the knot of individuality is a binding force which inwardly ties the Spirit in its bonds, and outwardly holds it within the reality of individual existence. The unbinding of the knot symbolises the Liberation

¹²⁰ As Kramrisch (1946: 51 & n. 88) points out, *prâna*, the Breath, was also used in early systems as the shortest measure of concrete time, being the time needed for inspiration and expiration.

which is referred to as the attainment of the state of immortality in Brahmanism, and as Buddhahood in Buddhism. As asserted in *Katha Upanisad* (II. 15), "When all the knots that fetter the heart are cut asunder, then a mortal becomes immortal". As taught by the Buddhist *Lêng-yen ching* (楞嚴經, *Sûrangama sûtra*), "To untie the knot of the being is to attain the perfect freedom of Buddhahood". (Snodgrass 1985: 114) That is to say, for a sentient being who is still bound to the Law of Retribution, the untying means the end of his suffering, escape from transmigrating, the attainment of freedom.

In practice, as described in the *Sûrangama sûtra*, owing to the principle that "Having been tied in a certain order, they can only be untied in the reverse order", a rigorous sequence of meditations is prescribed by the Buddha to unbind the constraints of individual existence (For details of the meditation sequences, see Luk 1966: 118). In Tantrism, the untying is practised by piercing the spot between the eyebrows (*ajñâcakra*), so as to untie the knot of Rudra (*rudragranthi*), and thereby open the third eye, which enables sentient beings to see the true nature of the binding cord.

The field, or world (*ksetra*), of the *mandala*, upon which a network of Breath lines lies includes both a supramundane and mundane, spiritual and worldly, significance. In supramundane terms, the field represents macrocosmically the Buddha kingdom or microcosmically the mind-field of sentient beings. As asserted in the Pure Land *Amitâyur-dhyâna sûtra* (9-10), the Breath cord is regarded as the golden rope which macrocosmically reticulates the Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land and microcosmically lays down upon the mind-field of the devotee by the technique of meditation, known as the sixteen visualisations. A Pure Land *mandala* painting which serves as a support for the visualisations illustrates the doctrine by showing a ground divided by crossed golden lines. According to *Bukkyô Daijiten* (2406-8), the picture of this divided ground is commonly adopted by all Buddhist schools as a means of

exemplifying the belief. In sum, the intertwined crosswise Breath cord, or golden rope, in the form of a *mandala*, articulates and measures out the supramundane ground of the Buddha Land and the inward minds of sentient beings.

Regarding the mundane field, the Breath cord is represented by the Hua-yen school as *li*, (理, "Principle") (Sze 1957: 30-1 & 101 and see above 2.5.4.), which reticulates the phenomenal world. Moreover, the pneumatic network, which is formed by *li*, is personified in the Buddha Vairocana of the Matrix Mandala. As asserted in *Bukkyô Daijiten* (1937), the Buddha Vairocana abides at the hub of the World Wheel, the locus of *li*, or the Principle, that governs phenomenal existences. That is, the Buddha Vairocana represents the Body of Principle which embodies the belief in a pneumatic net of order that sustains the mundane world. As Snodgrass (1985: 113) points out,

"Macrocosmically, and taking the net to represent the 'field' formed by a plane of existence, each of the crossing points represents an individuality, a nodal aggregation or knot of being; microcosmically, and taking the net to represent the 'field' formed by an individual existence, the crossings are the vital nodes within the body, the places where the Breaths or Winds channelled by the *nâdis* converge to vital centres".

The *mandala* functions as "an aid in inducing certain mental states and in encouraging the spirit to move forward along its path of evolution from the biological to the geometric, from the realm of corporeal forms to the spiritual" (Cirlot 1962: 199). Moreover, by means of the *mandala*, "a man may move gradually towards the inner area, identifying himself with each stage as he goes" (Cirlot 1962: 202). The *mandala* not only serves as the focus of contemplation and concentration but also has a ritual function. It is regarded as "an objective symbol, an *imago mundi*" (Ibid.); the visual expression of the desire of the devotee to be reunited with the a-spatial and a-temporal Centre.

4.5. THE PROLIFERATION OF THE BUDDHA PANTHEON

The Buddha pantheon manifest as the innumerable small Buddha images studded on the walls or ceilings of Buddhist architecture is another facet which reflects the characteristics of the principles of cardinal orientation which inform the Chinese Buddhist temple. The countless Buddhas who are regarded as the result of the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon symbolise the assembly of the myriad Buddhas, in the centre of which the Buddha Sâkyamuni preached the Dharma advocating the saving of all sentient beings.

Images of the Buddha pantheon can be found throughout cave, pagoda, and pavilion temples. In the case of the cave temple, there are many caves (ca. 5th century) where the walls are covered with innumerable small Buddha statues. In the Ten-thousand Buddha Cave of the Lung-men caves temple, for example, the walls were filled with numerous Buddha images, as shown in Figure 4.25. The same decoration may also be located on the facade of a pagoda -- the exterior of the building being covered with small Buddha statues, as shown in Figure 4.26. Within the temple premises, a pavilion, called the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall or the Thousand Buddha Hall, is specifically built for housing the images of the Buddha pantheon.¹²¹ As shown in Figure 4.27., there are myriads of bricks in both the inner and outer walls of the building. Inside each of these bricks which measure about 0.3 metre square each, a Buddha image is enshrined. Here, "ten-thousand" or "thousand" simply signifies the extremely large number of Buddhas in the hall.¹²² In iconography, the myriad Buddha

¹²¹ Normally the hall is located within the temple premise. However, in some cases, when a temple can not afford to erect a special hall for the accommodation of the myriads of the Buddhas, their images are usually placed in the library or rather amid the arrangement of the library in their hall.

¹²² It seems that the figures "thousands or ten-thousand" are derived directly from the T'ien-t'ai school's "Three-Thousand Great World" system or Buddhaghosa's "Ten-Thousand World" system mentioned in 2.4.2. & 2.5.3. However, there is no document to justify this view. We may assume that they are seen as signifying an extremely large number rather than as an exact amount.

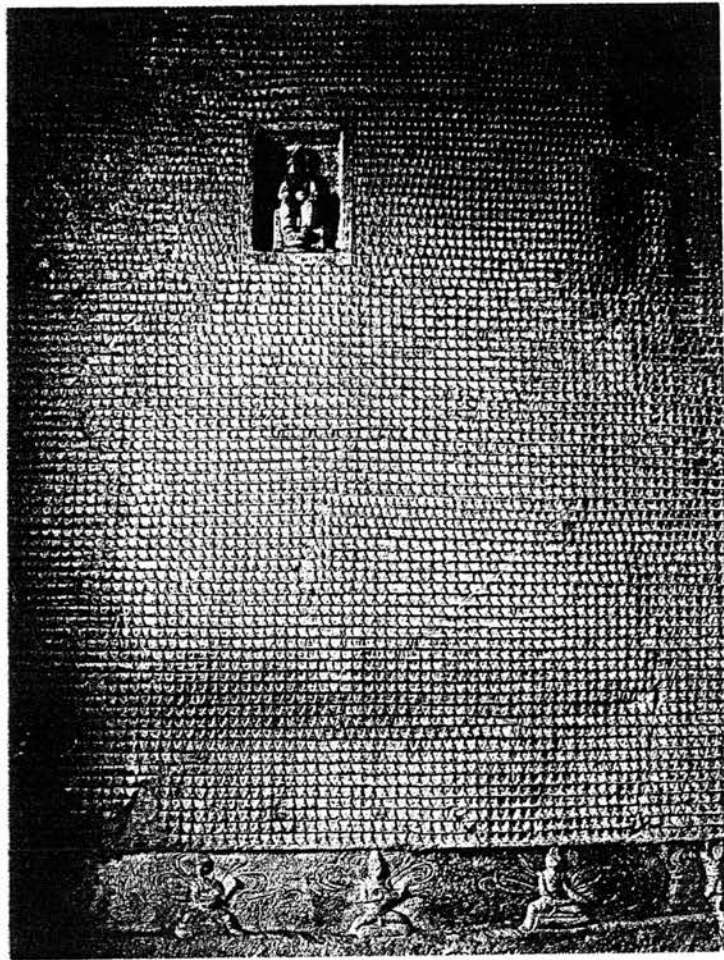


Figure 4.25. Wall of Ten-thousand Buddha Cave, Lung-men cave temple (Chuang 1981: I, 72)

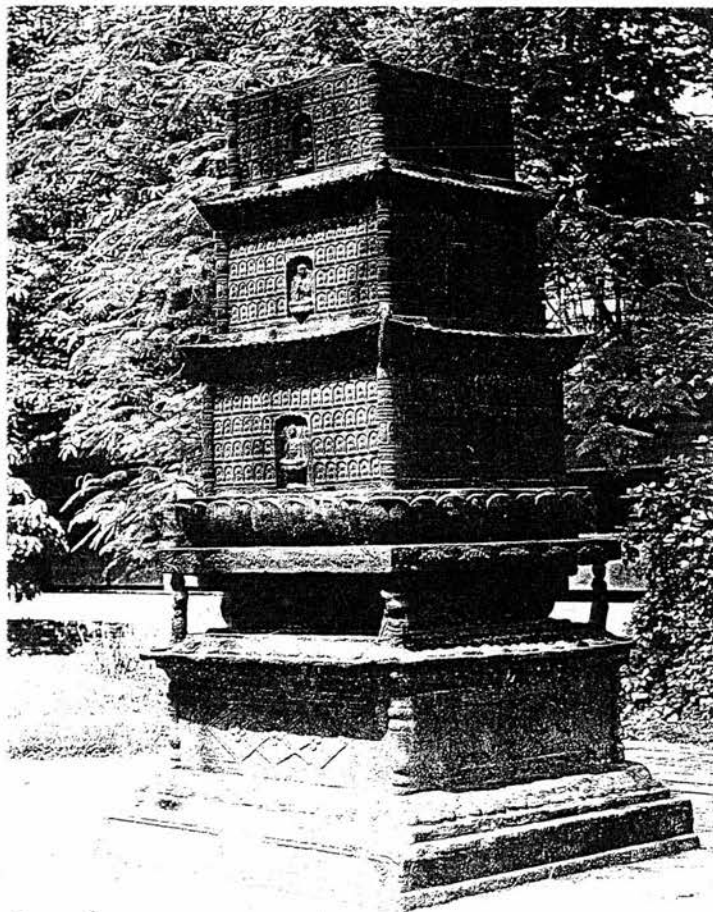


Figure 4.26. Kuang-hsiao temple pagoda, Kwangtung province (Hsieh 1987: 78)

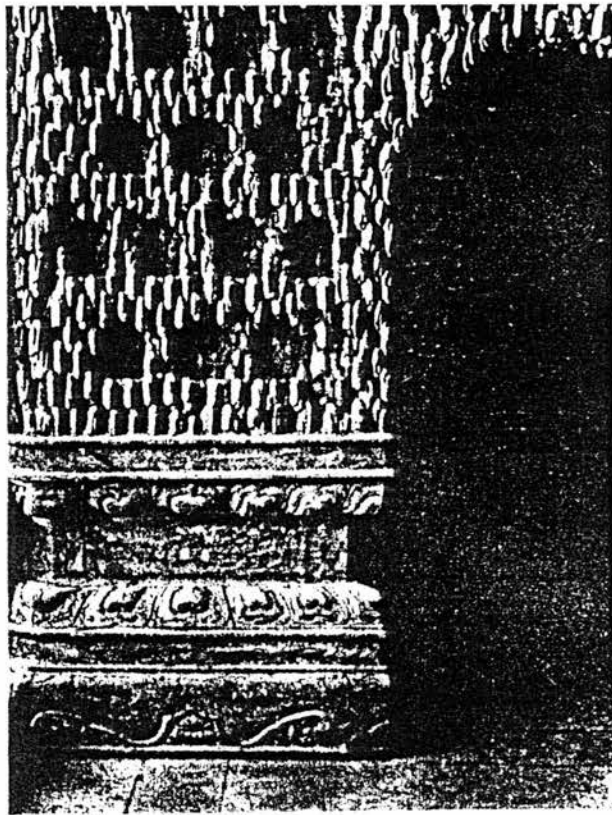
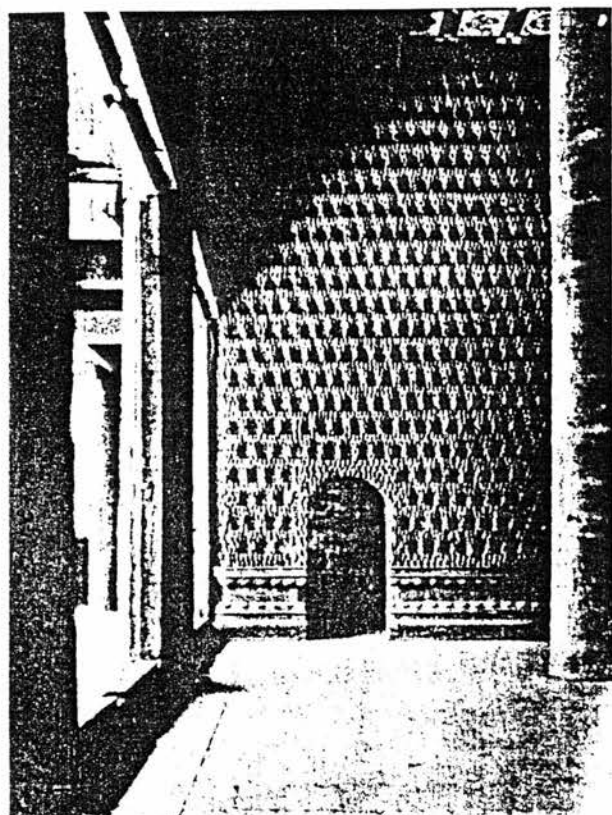


Figure 4.27. Interior of the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall, Pei-hai, Peking
(Prip-moller 1937: 63)

images are occasionally found decorating the facade of the throne of a Buddhist statue, as shown in Figure 4.28.

The Buddha pantheon originates from the idea of the omni-presence of the Brahmanic deity Brahmâ-Prajâpati. In Brahmanism, the Brahmâ-Prajâpati is said to create the whole cosmos by dispersing his body, or "Unity", into each and every part of the world. This is called the "Diversity of Manifestation". In this view, all beings in the universe are fragments of his body. Moreover, owing to his omni-present character, he is able to appear in any place of the world at any period of time, that is to say, his presence has transcended the confines of the space and time. The Brahmâ-Prajâpati represents the progenitive Centre, and is considered the architect of the universe, "Lord of Progeny" and "Father of the World" (Snodgrass 1985: 52). In iconography, his omni-presence is expressed by his multiple heads facing in all directions and his innumerable hands and feet.

It is this doctrine of the omni-presence of the deity that was adopted and adapted later by Buddhists. In Buddhism, the correspondent deity is the Buddha Sâkyamuni who possesses great power and is honoured as the "Supreme Person" (*purusottama*) (Coomaraswamy 1979: 47). The *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (妙法蓮華經, "Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra", *Saddharma-pundarika sūtra*) (III & XV. 21; *TSD* 9, no. 262), describes him as

"[The Buddha], the Tathâgata, endowed with Buddha-Knowledge, power to a Buddha, mighty with supernatural power is *lokapitâ*, the 'Father of the World', or *sarvaprajâna-nâtha*, the 'Lord of Begotten Existence'" (Author; cf. Snodgrass 1985: 52).

As the "Father of the World", or the "Lord of Begotten Existence", the Buddha concretises all beings in the world including the myriad sentient beings and countless Buddhas. Moreover, his omni-presence has transcended the confines of two coordinates of the universe -- space and time. That is to say, the Buddha can appear at



Figure 4.28. Buddha statue, Hsing-chiao-ssû, Hsi-an (Chuang 1981: I, 57)

any time and any place in the cosmos (For details of the Buddhist cosmology, see above 2.4.2.).¹²³

In terms of space, his essential body, as asserted in the *Ta pan-jo po-lo mi-tuo lun* (大般若波羅蜜多論, *Mahâ-pradjñâ-pâramita sâstra*), can "fill space in ten directions; it is immense, endless or *anata*, ... like space" (Auboyer 1949: 148). In other passages of the sutra, the same idea occurs:

"Showing his great body (*mahâkâya*) of pure light and various colours, he filled space (*âkâsâ*"); and "To attempt to measure his body would be a never-ending task. It goes beyond the world of space..."¹²⁴

Therefore, the Buddha once said,

"My body is inconceivable (*acintya*). Brahmâ, the king of the gods..., the gods and the elders... desired to measure my body and discover my voice; they were unable to fathom them" (Kloetzli 1989: 69).

Moreover, according to the *Hua-yen pu* (華嚴部, *Avatamsaka sûtra*),¹²⁵ even in the tiniest element of the cosmos, we can trace the body of the Buddha (Snellgrove 1978: 201). In this view, the Buddha proliferates himself "to be present in every tiniest grain of dust in the universe" (Snodgrass 1985: 53). Furthermore, apart from the space of all cardinal directions, the body of the Buddha also appears at all *kalpas*,¹²⁶ in everlasting cosmic time. According to the *Fang-teng pen-ch'i ching* (方等本起經, *Lalitavistara*), there are one thousand worlds in each of the three *kalpas*, that is, the periods of the past, the present and the future.¹²⁷ Three thousand worlds, each of which is

¹²³ The notion of the infinite universe in terms of both space and time has been addressed in 2.4.2.: Hinayâna Buddhism asserts the cosmology of thousands with the focus on time and the Mahâyâna the cosmology of the innumerable with the focus on the ten regions of space (Meyer 1992: 74-5).

¹²⁴ According to Nâgarjuna's *Ta-pan-jo lun*, or *Mahâ-prajñâpâramitâ-sâstra*, the Buddha's body, which "may appear being any size", is one of his three secrets, namely, that of his body, that of his voice and that of his thought (See Lamotte 1949: 560-62 and Kloetzli 1989: 69).

¹²⁵ A subdivision of the *Sûtra Pitaka* (Eitel 1970: 26).

¹²⁶ See 2.4.2. Literally, *kalpa* is described as a vast aeon, of calculable length (Ishizuka and Coates 1949: 369, n. 19).

¹²⁷ As has been stated in 2.4.2, by the time of the fourth *kalpa*, there is nothing but vacancy.

ruled by a Buddha, come together to form the body of the Buddha, or the universe (Auboyer 1949: 148 and *Mikkyô Daijiten* 468).¹²⁸

To sum up, the body of the Buddha, like Prajâpati, is equal to the infinite universe in both spatial and temporal terms. Microcosmically, the doctrine is also echoed in the Mahâyâna interpretation of the Essence of the Buddhahood, in that all beings and entities "possess the Buddha nature, even though obscured by our ignorance and attachment." (Snodgrass 1985: 52) That is to say, the omni-presence of the Buddha equates with the fact that the Buddha nature is embodied within all beings. Therefore, from the ontological and psychological points of view, the Buddha, as the Brahmanic Brahmâ-Prajâpati, is identified as the Progenitive Centre (Coomaraswamy 1979: 47).

In Buddhism, the power of proliferation is considered to be one of the five superknowledges (*abhijnâs*) of the Buddha.¹²⁹ As far as the source is concerned, the power is said to be acquired through meditation (Kloetzli 1989: 65-6). It is revealed in the *Abhidharmakosa* that the power is "identical with the concentrations (*samâdhis*) and also that the thoughts of transformation (*nirmânacitta*) proceed from the meditations, or *dhyânas*" (La Vallée Poussin 1971: 112 & 117). By displaying the power, the Buddha multiplies into countless other Buddhas to fill space in all directions and the three *kalpas* (Kloetzli 1989: 65). The power has been frequently employed by the Buddha to assist him in preaching the Dharma, both during his lifetime and after *parinirvâna* (Kloetzli 1989: 64 & 67).

¹²⁸ The figure "one thousand" here represents an extremely large quantity rather than an exact number.

¹²⁹ The five superknowledges of the Buddha are: "1. magical powers or *siddhis* including the powers of multiplication (*nirmâna*), and displacement (*gamana*); 2. divine eye (*divyacakṣus*); 3. divine hearing (*divyastrotṛa*); 4. knowledge of another's thought (*paracittajñâna*); and 5. recollection of previous existence (*pûrvanirvâsânusmṛti*)." (Kloetzli 1989: 65) The superknowledges as a whole, as asserted in *Majjima Nikâya*, are "the fruit of liberating [concentrations] (*vimokṣas*)" (Lamotte 1958: 32).

As indicated in *Divyâvadâna* (162), the Buddha Sâkyamuni once sat in meditation with the god Sakra and Brahmâ on a lotus. He multiplied himself firstly into five seated Buddhas above, in front of, behind, and to the either side of him; he then proliferated himself again into an assembly of Buddhas filling the heaven up to the Akanistha, the uppermost level of the heavens of the World of Form (Foucher 1917: 159). Also, as described in the *Fo-shuo ta-ch'eng chuang-yen pao-wang ching* (佛說大乘莊嚴寶王經, *Karanda-vyûha sûtra*), the multiplication of the Buddha occurred again in the Great Miracle at Srâvasti wherein the Buddha was asked by the King Prasenajit to display his power (Figure 4.29.). At this request, the Buddha rose into the sky, walked in the air, radiated fire and water from different parts of his body,¹³⁰ and multiplied his image. The sky was full of Buddha images preaching. After a thunderstorm, the immense multitude condensed once again to the original unitary condition.¹³¹

With regards to Buddhist cosmology, the religious basis of the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon, or the omni-presence of the Buddha, lies in the doctrines of self-multiplication (*adhitthâna*) or self-transformation (*vikubbanâ*) advocated in the Sâhasra-cosmology, and the doctrine of illumination (*rasmirddhibala*) in the Asankhyeya-cosmology. In terms of the Sâhasra-cosmology, the numerology of the "thousands" world system is interpreted in integrity as a single Buddha in the single Buddha field (See above 2.4.2.). That is to say, there is only one Buddha existing in these numerous worlds and the whole world system is seen as one Buddha land.

In this view, the countless created Buddhas, the so-called *nirmânabuddhas*, who have all been self-multiplied or self-transformed by the Buddha, are regarded as

¹³⁰ The flame was emitted from the upper part of the body and waves of water from the lower part (Snodgrass 1985: 54).

¹³¹ The miracle is also mentioned in the *Fa-chü pi-yü ching* 法句譬喻經 (*Dhammapad-atthakathâ*), XVI. TSD 4, no. 211 (see A. Foucher 1917: 152).



Figure 4.29. Great Miracle at Srāvasti (Mitra 1971, fig. 14)

illusions in the Sâhasra-cosmology (Teresina Rowell 1935: 135). That is to say, there is only one real Buddha in the Sâhasra-cosmos. In fact, it is only because it is interpreted by the doctrine of self-multiplication or self-transformation that the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon does not contradict the belief in a single Buddha and land asserted by the Sâhasra-cosmology. However, as Kloetzli (1989: 67, 68 and 70) points out, the connection between the innumerable created Buddhas and their Origin is comparable to the leaves and the stem of a plant, or to a plant and the seed. That is to say, every Buddha illusion is still considered as possessing the essential Buddha-nature.

Regarding the Asankhyeya-cosmology, the universe is composed of the countless Buddha lands, and these myriad Buddha lands are distributed throughout the ten regions of space. Each of these Buddha lands is inhabited by a host Buddha and other innumerable Buddhas. As taught in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* (VII. 59 and XI), the Buddha Aksobhya is the principal Buddha of the East, and the Buddha Amitâyus that of the West; furthermore, in the East, for example, there are five hundred thousand myriads of millions of other Buddhas preaching the Dharma in their own Buddha countries (see Mus 1935: 601). Here the numerology of Buddhas and their Buddha kingdoms is described repeatedly in Buddhist scriptures, they are "as numerous as the sands of the river Gangâ" (Kloetzli 1989: 119). In this cosmology, all the Buddhas are considered to be real Buddhas who reside in the innumerable Buddha lands. Illuminated by rays of light emitting from the body of the Buddha, these countless Buddhas in the innumerable Buddha lands are made visible to one another. In short, the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon is concretised in the Asankhyeya-cosmology by the doctrine of illumination.

The doctrine of illumination is illustrated by the Ten Acts of the Buddha which were performed for transforming the Sahâ world into the Pure Land. In Buddhist

scripture, the doctrine is to be found in the chapters XIV and XV of *Ta-pan-jo lun* (*Mahâ-prajñâpâramitâ-sâstra*). According to the sutra, before the Buddha started to emit rays of light from his body, he entered into the state of the "King of Concentration" (*samâdhirâjasamâdhi*), which enabled him to get access to each and every Buddha land without difficulty and to display his miraculous powers, or superknowledges.

When he saw through his divine eyes that all beings were suffering from karmic retribution, he performed the First Act which was the emission of innumerable rays of light from the thousand-spoked wheel imprinted on the sole of his foot, thereby illuminating the countless Buddha countries throughout the ten regions of space. In the Second Act, the Buddha issued innumerable rays of light from all the pores of his skin; in the Third, he emitted innumerable rays from his halo, and in the Fourth, he extended his tongue into the space of the ten regions and emitted from it yet more innumerable rays. The countless Buddhas then appeared and began to preach the Dharma.

In the Buddhist sutras, the doctrine is revealed in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*. According to the sutra, the Buddha preached the Dharma in the myriad *kotis* of the Buddha lands throughout the ten directions. In preaching, the Buddha was encircled by innumerable Buddhas who all proliferated from his body. The scenario of the preaching was made visible by a ray of light emanating from the Buddha's brow, *ûrnâ*. The doctrine of illumination is testified to repeatedly throughout the sutra. For example, as described in the sixth chapter,

"an enormous gathering of disciples, *bodhisattvas*, gods and spirits assembled around the Buddha and listened to his exposition of [the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*]. During the preaching, a pagoda appeared and a voice was heard confirming the truth of the spoken word. Upon this [the Buddha] took the opportunity to explain to the assembly that the oldest Buddha in ages long past vowed to appear in [the pagoda] of his

interment wherever and whenever [the *Miao-fa lien-hua-ching*] was preached."

"When asked to make this First Buddha appear, [the Buddha] explained that [the First Buddha] had also vowed never to do so except in the presence of all the Buddhas who later emanated from [the Buddha] and now preaching the Law throughout the universe. [The Buddha] thereupon caused the ten thousand Buddhas to appear, upon which [the pagoda] with the First Buddha visible within materialised before the whole assembly. [The Buddha] then took up his seat beside the First Buddha and lifted up the whole gathering into the air, where he made known to them all his intention, now stronger than ever to disseminate [the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*]." (Prip-moller 1937: 64)

Here, the First Buddha, the Buddha assembly, and the pagoda were made visible by the illumination of the Buddha light. Moreover, according to *Pan-chou san-mei ching* (般舟三昧經, "Seeing all Buddhas *Samâdhi-sûtra*"), or *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhâvasthita-samâdhi sûtra*, the power that caused the countless Buddhas to appear is the *samâdhi* power which is the power of the merits accumulated by good deeds (Kloetzli 1989: 108-9).

Furthermore, according to the 20th chapter of the same sutra, the Buddha Sâkyamuni once asked for the appearance of the Buddha of the previous aeon, Prabhutaratna, that he might preach the Dharma. When the previous Buddha arrived, the Buddha Sâkyamuni joined with him immediately preaching the Dharma face to face. While preaching, both Buddhas rose slowly and appeared finally in the sky,

"from their mouths came tongues, so that their tongues extended to the Brahmaloka, and from there these two tongues issued forth countless myriads of rays, and from each ray countless myriads of Bodhisattvas, of golden body... who, stationed in every quarter, preached the Law... so that every existence in every Buddha field heard that voice from the sky." (*Saddharma-pundarika sûtra* XX; cf. Hendrik Kern 1963: 364f and Snodgrass 1985: 55)

Here, the myriads of rays being emitted from the tongues of the Buddhas illuminated the countless Buddha fields and reached the heavens of the Brahmaloka (Figure 4.30.).

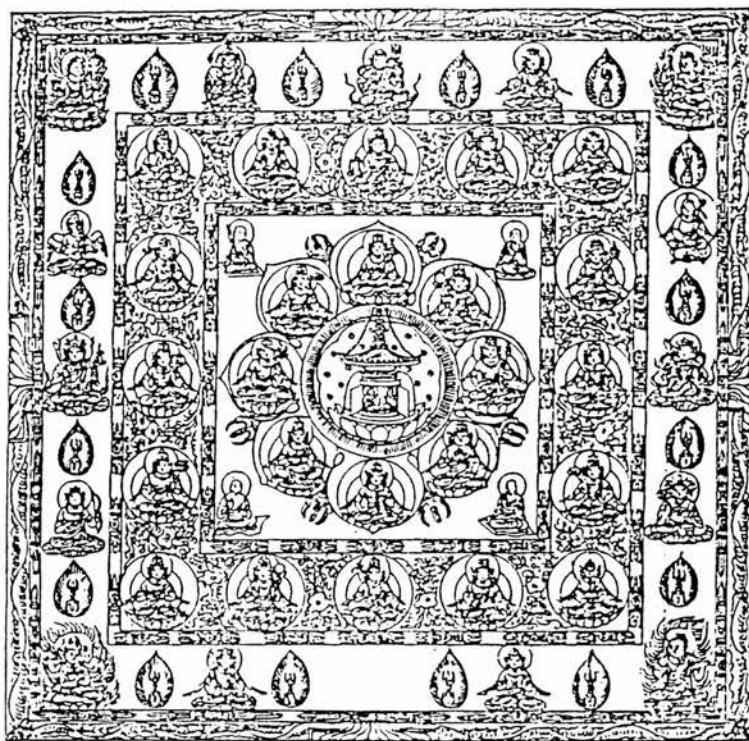


Figure 4.30. Buddhas Sâkyamuni and Prabhutaratna sat next to each other preaching Dharma inside the pagoda (Snodgrass 1985: 363)

The final five of the Ten Acts of the Buddha were devoted to saving the sentient beings from suffering. In the Fifth Act, the Buddha entered the state of "Concentration known as the Play of the Lion", or *simhavikrīditasamādhi*. At that moment, the world shook and all beings of the three evil ways (beasts, hungry ghosts, and damned beings) were reborn as human beings.¹³² In the Sixth Act, the Buddha sat on the Lion's Throne displaying his distinguished form. In the Seventh, the Buddha showed the thirty-two primary marks and eighty minor marks of his body to all sentient beings to strengthen their faith in Deliverance.

In the Eighth Act, the Buddha issued the myriad rays of light to illuminate the Buddhas land of the ten regions. Through this Act, the whole universe was made visible, and a series of ritual activities were able to take place so as to transform the Sahâ world into the Pure Land. In the Ninth, the ritual of the transformation was implemented in the Sahâ world by a *bodhisattva* who was sent by one of the host Buddhas of the Buddha land. For example, in the Buddha land where the Buddha Ratnâvati is the leader, the Bodhisattva Samantarasmi was commissioned by him to go to the Sahâ world to perform the rite. In the Tenth Act, conveyed by the rays emanating from the Buddha Sâkyamuni, the Bodhisattva Samantarasmi arrived at the Sahâ world. To express appreciation, the Bodhisattva presented a thousand-petaled lotus to honour the Buddha. The Buddha Sâkyamuni received the offering and multiplied it to fill all the Buddha lands of the ten regions. By this Act, the rite of transformation was completed and the Sahâ world became a Pure Land.

In the last two acts, Bodhisattvas play a major role in the mission of salvation. Apart from the performance of the rite, a Bodhisattva also has the power to enlarge his body to accommodate the countless Buddha lands. In the *Hua-yen ching* (*Avatamsaka*

¹³² According to the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, when the Buddha entered into the state of Concentration, the world shook in six ways, "it moved, removed, trembled, trembled from one end to the other, tossed, tossed along." (Kern 1963: 6-7).

sûtra), the body of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra is described as having "incalculable Buddha Lands, innumerable as particles of dust, in each of the pores of his skin". (Mikkyô Daijiten 1915b) Moreover, in the *Fo-shuo ta-ch'eng chuang-yen pao-wang ching* (*Karand-vyûha sûtra*), the same idea is addressed as follows: within each pore of the skin of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, we may identify the whole universe (Snellgrove 1978: 326). The power of a Bodhisattva is illustrated in the T'ien-lung-shan cave temple where the rear wall of the cave has been filled with the countless small Buddha figures forming a background for the big standing Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara who has one thousand arms and eyes and represents great mercy and compassion.

The doctrine of illumination is also preached in the Pure Land sutra. In the legendary event described in the *Kuan wu-liang shou-fo ching* (觀無量壽佛經, *Amitâyur-dhyâna sûtra*) (I. 5), the Buddha emitted a golden light from the spot between his eyebrows to illuminate the Buddha Land for the Queen Vaidehi. At the moment the ray was sent out,

"it extended to all the innumerable worlds of the ten quarters. On its return the ray rested on top of the Buddha's head and transformed itself into golden pillar just like the Mt. Sumeru, wherein the pure and admirable countries of the Buddhas in ten quarters appeared all at once illuminated." (Cowell 1975: 166)

In short, the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon fills the whole universe (Kloetzli 1989: 65). In the context of the concept of the universe defined in the Sâhasra-cosmology, that is, the single Buddha and Buddha field, these countless Buddhas are regarded only as an illusion, but partaking of the Buddha-nature. In contrast, the universe acknowledged in the Asankhyeya-cosmology is composed of countless Buddhas and Buddha lands. In this world system, the Buddha pantheon who dwell in the countless Buddha lands are regarded as real Buddhas all of them

issued from the Buddha. As testified in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, the Buddha preaches,

"I have miraculously created from my own body many Tathâgata forms, which in the ten directions of space in separate Buddha field, in thousands of worlds, preach the Law to creatures" (Kern 1963: 231);

"...from the moment when I began to preach the Law to creatures in the Sahâ world. And in hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of worlds, the venerable Tathâgata Dipamkara and others ... have all been miraculously produced by me" (Mus 1935: 603).

Furthermore, he says,

"The moment has come to bring together here all the Buddhas that I have produced by dividing my body and who preach the Law in the ten directions of space." (Snodgrass 1985: 55).

The doctrine of illumination plays a central role in this cosmology. According to the doctrine, the aim of the emission of innumerable rays of light by the Buddha is to illuminate all the various Buddhas and their lands so as to make them visible to one another and able to perform the rite for transforming the *Sahâ* world into the Pure Land.

The proliferation of the Buddha pantheon in both cosmologies symbolises the supremacy of the Buddha over the whole universe. In terms of its metaphysical function, the manifestation of the Buddha pantheon enhances the faith of the devotee who devotes his life to the sacred mission, that is, to become a Buddha, or Bodhisattva, and to save all sentient beings from suffering (Prip-moller 1937: 65).

CHAPTER 5
THE SYMBOLISM OF AXIALITY
AND
THE DOCTRINE OF ULTIMATE RETURN

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The primary halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple, e.g the gatehouse, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, the Great Buddha Hall, the Dharma Hall, and so on, are arranged on the central axis, as shown in Figure 5.1.; the ancillary halls, which were either added to the temple premises in course of time to fulfil the three religious functions -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha -- such as the Patriarch Hall, the *arhat* hall, the library, the ordination hall etc., or which serve purposes relating only to daily monastic life, including administrative offices, the monks' living quarters, bathing rooms, refectory, and storage rooms etc., are placed on the two side axes. This temple structure is the one most commonly applied in both large and small temples in China.

With regards to spatial organisation, the essential characteristic of the Chinese Buddhist temple which embodies the doctrine of Ultimate Return is its axiality. Within the temple premises, this characteristic is manifested in the emphasis placed upon the North-South and East-West axes in its spatial organisation in general, the hierarchy of buildings on the central longitudinal axis in particular, and, by implication, on the Buddhist practices of cremation and meditation.

The reason for the alignment of temple buildings with the North-South axis is that it symbolises the spiritual path of the devotee attempting to return to the Centre.

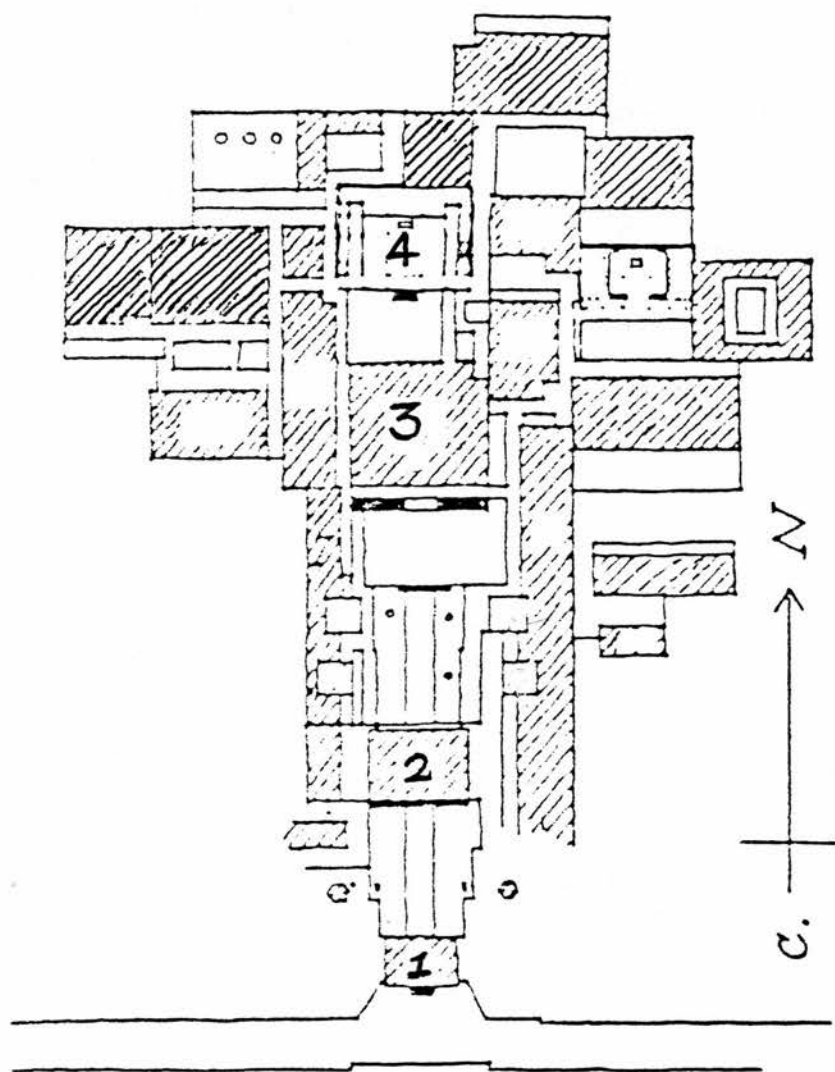


Figure 5.1. Layout, Chi-yüan-ssû, Chekiang province (Prip-moller 1937: 67)
 1. gatehouse, 2. Heavenly Kings' Hall, 3. Great Buddha Hall,
 4. Dharma Hall.

That is to say, the journey of the devotee from South to North symbolises his escape from the endless cycle of transmigration and attainment of the Enlightenment. For those who fail to reach the North, they will fall back to and out of the South into the cycle of metempsychosis. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, the spiritual journey can be denoted as the sacred ascent from the mundane world to Heaven. In this sense, the North-South axis is regarded as the projection of the channel of the vertical ascent towards the Heaven on Earth.

As to the East-West axis, its significance is not displayed explicitly in architectural form, but is metaphysically revealed as the temporal sequence of the era of the Buddhist Paradises by the Buddha trinity worshipped in the Great Buddha Hall. In Buddhist connotation, the Buddha on the East of the central altar represents the Governor of the Past Kingdom, or the Eastern Paradise, the Buddha in the centre represents the King of the Present Kingdom, and the Buddha on the right, or the West, symbolises the Lord of Future Kingdom, or the Western Heaven. By extension, as revealed in the legend of the seven-week retreat of the Buddha (Cf. 4.3.1.), the East-West axis represents the supremacy of the Buddhas over the whole cosmos in all directions and in the past, present, and future aeons.

When it comes to the individual buildings on the North-South axis, each is built to reveal the specific Buddhist hierarchy and ceremonial order. That is to say, the position of each individual hall on this axis corresponds to a stage in the Buddhist spiritual journey, and the procession of the devotee from one hall to another is considered as the progression through the spiritual stages towards the Centre.

Of these halls, the entrance gate (*shan-men*) represents the threshold of the spiritual journey, or the South. In other words, passing through the gate, the devotee is officially embarking upon the journey. Next along the path comes the Heavenly

Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien*), the building representing the second stage of the journey. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, this stage, or the realm of the Devaloka, lies between the phenomenal world and the realm of Brahmaloka. In Buddhist connotation, beings at this stage, who are honoured as heavenly kings serving to protect the Three Jewels of Buddhism, are still subject to metempsychosis. That is to say, only by passing through the hall are they able to progress from the realm of the Devaloka to that of the Brahmaloka where beings have ceased transmigrating.

After the Heavenly Kings' Hall, the devotee arrives at the spiritual as well as architectural Centre of the Chinese Buddhist temple -- the hall which symbolises the final destination of the journey, or the North. During the early phase of the spread of Buddhism, this final destination was represented by the pagoda, which was placed at the centre of the temple complex. In course of time, the supreme position of the pagoda declined because of the increase of Buddhist iconic worship, and the Great Buddha Hall, in which the Buddha images were enshrined, replaced the pagoda and became the Centre of the temple complex. Still later, after the decline of iconic worship hastened by the Ch'an school, the Dharma Hall replaced the Great Buddha Hall and became the symbol of the ultimate goal of the spiritual path.

To summarise, the procession of the devotee from the entrance gate to the Centre of the temple is seen as a sacred journey, a pilgrimage from *samsâra* (the suffering world) to *nirvâna*. Metaphysically, this spiritual journey is also reflected in the Buddhist practices of cremation and meditation. By means of the physical fire of the cremation, all the impediments that stand in the way of the spiritual journey are burnt away, and by meditation the devotee cultivates the inward flame that annihilates mental obstacles, and thereby achieves spiritual sublimation.

Because of the significance of the axiality embedded in it, the Chinese Buddhist temple, as taught in *Fo-ti lun* (佛地論, "Discourse on Buddhist Kingdom"), or *Buddhabhûmi-sûtra-sâstra*, is regarded as "the abode for those who wish to keep the precepts and commandments, and embark on 'the path of cultivation' that leads finally to ultimate Deliverance, ..." (*Ta-tsang-ching pu-pien* 19.14; Lan Chi-fu ed. 1986; see Ho 1992: 81). In other words, the temple is an architectural reality which embodies the metaphysical truth -- the belief in an Ultimate Return to the Centre, the Buddha, or the final Enlightenment.

5.2. THE DOCTRINE OF ULTIMATE RETURN

The belief that the spiritual journey of the individual is, in fact, a progression which culminates in Ultimate Return to the Centre has been a tradition since the beginning of the Indian civilisation. As it is taught in *Rig Veda* (II. 38.6),

"The seeker, having gone forth, returns; home is the desire of all things that proceed; abandoning his never-completed task he comes back again." (Griffith 1963)

Here, "home" is denoted as the Centre, or the final goal of the spiritual path. As indicated in *Prasna Upanisad* (VI. 6), having reached home, or the Centre, the devotee is the one "on whom the parts stand fast, as spokes in the nave of the wheel" (Hume 1931); moreover, as revealed in *Atharva Veda* (XIX. 53.6-9), "in him are all beings, and the eye that oversees; *manas*, or intellect, *prâna*, or breath, and *nâma*, or noumenon, coincident in him when he come forth all his children enjoy; sent by him and born of him, it is in him that all this universe is established." (Whitney and Lanman 1905)

In Buddhist ideas, to return to the Centre is to be Awakened, or to be a Buddha. No matter whether it is in the interpretation of the Hinayâna cosmology

where there is only one Buddha in the universe or in the Mahâyâna cosmology where tens of thousands of Buddhas abide in every space of ten regions and every epoch (*kalpa*) as numerous as the sands of the Gangâ, the Buddha is regarded as the Centre of Buddhist devotion (Cf. above 2.4.2.). In terms of the spiritual cultivation of devotees, they have to pass through one station to the next in order to attain the state of the Buddha, the highest status in Buddhism. As Meyer (1992: 76) points out,

"It is the figure of this great saviour Buddha which becomes the centre of [the Buddhist temple complex], just as it has become the centre of Buddhist devotion."

Being structured in terms of the elaborate cosmology mentioned in 2.4.2., the Ultimate Return of the devotee back to the Centre, or to become a Buddha, can be manifested in four consecutive stages as follows. The first stage is the religious cultivation of the devotee towards the state of *arhat* which involves a series of spiritual practices. The second is when, after the devotee has become an *arhat*, he ceases to transmigrate and displays his powers of multiplication (*adhitthâna iddhi*), to prolong his life for the rest of the journey. The third is when the *arhat* on his spiritual journey towards the state of Buddha decides not to become a Buddha but a *bodhisattva* until all sentient beings are saved from the suffering of transmigration. The fourth is the final goal of the path, that is, the achievement of the state of Buddha. I shall discuss these stages in turn in the following paragraphs.

According to Buddhism, the practice of the first stage by the devotee includes three successive exercises, namely, preparatory cultivation, comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, and meditation. The main aim of the practice is to discard the defilements (*klesas*) of sentient beings. The preparatory cultivation consists of five steps as follows. First, the attainment of *shan-ken* (善 根, "Roots of Goods"), which includes thoughts and acts inspired by the purpose of salvation; secondly, the attainment of the moral qualities of the Buddhishood which is regulated in the

monastic code of conduct (Prâtimoksa); thirdly, the control of desire and distraction so as to enter the realm of meditation; fourthly, the study of the Buddhist Dharma so as to acquire enough knowledge to understand the essence of human sensation, body, and thought; and fifthly, the attainment of the pure qualities of human sensation, body, and thought.

When the final step is fulfilled, the devotee moves forward to the second exercise, the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. Here, the Four Noble Truths (*si-sheng-ti* 四 真 諦, *chatvâri-ârya-satyâni*), namely, *ku* (苦, *duhkha*), *chi* (集, *samudaya*), *mei* (滅, *nirodha*), and *tao* (道, *mârga*), are those preached by the Buddha in his First Sermon for the purpose of annihilating false views held by beings.¹³³ Because each of these Four Noble Truths is composed of four aspects (*âkâras*), the devotee who undertakes the exercise has to comprehend a total of sixteen Truths for its completion. In Buddhist terminology, to comprehend the first fifteen Truths is to understand "the 'Path of Vision' (*satyadarsanamârگا*, or *darsanamârگا*), because they constitute the first pure view of the truths" (Kloetzli 1989: 78). Having understood all sixteen Truths, the devotee will be rewarded with the first fruit of the practice, that is, entry into the stream of *nirvâna*, known as the "Stream Winner".

As has been stated, the aim of the first stage is to abandon the defilements that exist in the human body, sensations, and thoughts. Furthermore, these defilements can only be discarded by means of meditation. Therefore, after having got rid of all false views, the devotee still has to practice the final exercise, i.e. meditation, to achieve deliverance towards the state of *arhat*. In the Realm of Desire (*Kâmadhâtu*) where the religious cultivation of the devotee towards the state of *arhat* takes place,

¹³³ For details of the Four Noble Truths, see above 2.4.1.; the false views of beings here refer to the ideas such as the belief in "self", craving, etc.

there are altogether nine categories of defilement.¹³⁴ In Buddhist terminology, the fruit of the practice of meditation in this Realm of Desire (Kâmadhâtu) is that:

"[The devotee] who abandons the sixth category of [defilement] of the Kâmadhâtu becomes *sakrdâgâmin* or a 'once-returner'. He will not be reborn in the Kâmadhâtu more than one more time. The individual who abandons the ninth category of the Kâmadhâtu becomes *anâgâmin* or a 'never-returner'. He is liberated from further rebirth in the Kâmadhâtu altogether." (Kloetzli 1989: 79)

After the devotee finally overcomes the last class of the nine defilements, known as the *vajropamasamâdhi*, he has attained the state of *arhat* and ascended to the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu). Of the Buddhist deities, Sâkyamuni is a successful case of the practice. He became an *arhat* as a fruit of his meditation practice under the Bodhi Tree (Lamotte Etienne 1965: 20). For a diagrammatic summary of the spiritual components of this, the first stage on the journey, see Table 5.1.

As an *arhat*, the devotee enters the state of *nirvâna*, and possesses naturally the power of multiplication (*adhittâna iddhi*) which allows him to create another body from his essential body. Moreover, as has been said before, the devotee, once having attained the state of *arhat*, ceases transmigrating. In view of this, the body he produces is not a transmigrating body, or birth body, which is delivered as the retribution of *karma*, but is spiritual in nature, and known as *nirmânakâya*. It is the *nirmânakâya*, which is not subject to *karmic* retribution, which enables the *arhat* to prevent an "intermediate death" and to exist until the end of the world cycle, i.e. the last *mahâkalpa*.

¹³⁴ In Buddhist ideas, nine categories of defilements exist not only in the Realm of Desire (Kâmadhâtu), but also in the other eight successive stages of the meditation sphere (*navânupûrvavihâra*) of the Cakravâla world system, namely, four *dhyâna* of Rûpadhâtu, and four *samâpattis* of Ârûpyadhâtu (See above 2.4.2.). This means that, in order to achieve the final Liberation, i.e. to become a Buddha, the devotee has to abandon a total of eighty one defilements in the course of meditation; each of these desertion actions includes two critical steps, namely, the step of expulsion and that of liberation.

Table 5.1. The religious cultivation of the ascetic (Stage one) towards the state of *arhat* (Author).
Aim: To discard the defilements of sentient beings

Exercises	Contents	Total no. of steps	Rewards
Preparatory cultivation	1. Attainment of Roots of Goods 2. Attainment of moral qualities 3. Control of desire and distraction 4. Study of the Buddhist dharma 5. Attainment of pure quality of human	(5)	
Comprehension	Four Noble Truths (Each of these is composed by four aspects.)	(16)	1. Enter the "Path of Vision" (Comprehend the 15th truth) 2. Stream Winner (Comprehend the 16th truth)
Meditation	9 categories of defilements (Existed in 9 spheres: Kâmadhâtu 4 <i>dhyâna</i> of Rûpadhâtu 4 <i>samâpattis</i> of Ârûpyadhâtu)	(9)	1. Once Returner (Abandon the 6th category of Kâmadhâtu) 2. Never Returner (Abandon the 9th category of Kâmadhâtu)

As has been discussed in 2.4.2., after the completion of four *mâhakalpas*, this world will be destroyed and nothing will remain but empty space; all sentient beings will transmigrate or be reborn into their next life according to their previous acts. By means of *nirmânakâya*, the *arhat* may survive and continue his spiritual journey towards the state of Buddha. The other important reason for this prolongation of the *arhat's* life is that the *arhat* can only become a Buddha by making a vow (*pranidhâna*) in the presence of the Buddha, and the Buddha will not appear until the destruction of the world, i.e. at the end of the *mahâkalpas*.¹³⁵ Therefore, the extension of life is necessary for an *arhat* to achieve the state of Buddhahood.

According to the doctrine of Buddhism in general, Mahâyâna in particular, at the time when an *arhat* is entitled to become a Buddha, i.e. by making a vow in the presence of a Buddha, he may choose to become a *bodhisattva* (*p'u-sa* 菩薩 in Chinese), first, instead of having immediate access to the state of Buddha. The reason for choosing this delay resides in the fact that, as a *bodhisattva*, he "can more easily reach that part of creation still under the certain and painful conditions peculiar to wandering souls" (Reichelt 1934: 165).

In order to achieve the aim of saving all sentient beings, a *bodhisattva* is assigned to perform various virtues (*pâramitâ*) using his supernatural powers. As Kloetzli (1989: 102-3) points out,

"The facility of the *bodhisattva* to play at will with the supernatural powers is one of the primary characteristics of the Mahâyâna, and it underscores a fundamental distinction between the *bodhisattva* and the *arhat*."

¹³⁵ There are a variety of beliefs in Buddhist doctrine as to which period would cause the appearance of the Buddha (see La Vallée Poussin 1971: III. 192. n. 3 and Lamotte 1949: 269. n. 1, 299-302; 1958: 385. n. 29). However, as Kloetzli (1989: 87) points out, it is generally agreed that a Buddha would never appear until the completion of the four *mahâkalpas*. That is to say, in terms of Sâhasra-cosmology in which the worlds are framed by the passage of the cosmic *kalpas*, a Buddha would never appear in a *trisâhasramahâsâhasralokadhātu*.

As regards the prodigious acts of a *bodhisattva*, Kloetzli (1989: 103; see also Lamotte 1965: 30-2, 58-9) gives some examples as follows,

"... the multiplication of Buddhas; the manifestation of a glorious body; the transformation of assemblies... the creation of fictional *bodhisattvas*; changes of place without displacement; simultaneous manifestations of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* in several places at one time; apparitions of the Buddhas of the ten regions and the transformation of an 'impure' land into a 'pure' land... placing Mt. Sumeru in a grain of mustard; pouring the waters of the four oceans from a single pore of skin and tossing the *trisâhasramahâsâhasralokadhâtu* to one side of the universes as numerous as the sands of the Gangâ and then returning to its proper place... [placing] all the beings in the palms of their hands and [circulating] throughout all the universes but without displacing themselves; [introducing] the cosmic fires into their stomachs; [diminishing or expanding] time at will; etc."

As revealed in *Abhidharmakosa*, a *bodhisattva* honours seventy five thousand Buddhas during the first *mahâkalpa*, seventy six thousand during the second, seventy seven thousand during the third.

Having accomplished these countless benevolent acts, a *bodhisattva* is endowed with thirty two distinguishing marks that characterise a Great Man (*mahâpurusa*) in the presence of a Buddha; and by accumulating these merits, he resides in the Tusita heaven waiting for the achievement of the state of Buddhahood (Lamotte 1949: 249-55, 271-81; La Vallée Poussin 1971: IV. 220-7). Furthermore, according to *Ta-pan-jo lun* (大般若論, *Mahâ-praynaparamita-sâstra*), the era in which a *bodhisattva* completes his duration in Tusita heaven will be the era when he himself will appear as a Buddha. As to when and where this *bodhisattva* will become a Buddha, it will be predicted by an existing Buddha (La Vallée Poussin 1908: 739-53). In the case of Sâkyamuni, he projected himself in the centre of the Jambudvîpa continent after ninety one cosmic ages "for the purpose of assuming his position on the 'adamantine throne' (*vajrâsana*)", i.e. becoming a Buddha (Kloetzli 1989: 86 and

La Vallée Poussin 1971: III. 145; IV. 225).¹³⁶ After the long and laborious journey which includes three successive exercises for the attainment of the state of *arhat* and the countless benevolent acts performed by the *bodhisattva* during the three *mahâkalpas*, the devotee finally achieves the state of Buddha which is the final fruit of the spiritual path, the ultimate status of Buddhism.

The spiritual path, as a whole, can be summarised as the "Ascending Scale in Buddhism", or the "Ideal Scale of Evolution". This is shown in Table 5.2. Because the Evolution consists of ten grades altogether, the Ascending Scale is also called *shih-ti* (十地, "Ten States"), in China (Reichelt 1934: 177). According to the scale, when the devotee finishes the practice of the first stage of the spiritual path which includes preparatory cultivation, comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, and meditation, he discards all the defilements (*klesas*) that sentient beings possess, and ascends to the fifth grade, of the O-lo-han (阿羅漢, "Great *Arhat*"), where he is freed from the Wheel of Dharma. By passing through the sixth and seventh grades, *shêng-wên* (聖聞) and *yüan-chio* (緣覺), which correspond to the second stage of the spiritual path where the devotee ceases transmigrating and displays his multiplication power (*adhitthâna iddhi*), to prolong his life for the rest of the journey, he arrives at the eighth and the ninth grades, of the *p'u-sa* (*bodhisattva*), which correspond to the third stage where he is assigned to perform the various virtues (*pâramitâ*), by his supernatural powers. Finally, the devotee ascends to the tenth grade which corresponds to the fourth stage, the final goal of the path, or achievement of the state of Buddha.

By moving through each of the cosmological realms in this way, the spiritual path seems to be endless and its duration which is framed by the cosmic *kalpas*

¹³⁶ As to the ninety one cosmic age, normally, the length of time spent by a *bodhisattva* in Tusita heaven is one hundred cosmic ages. However, owing to the purification of Sâkyamuni's energy, he skipped nine cosmic ages and took only ninety one to achieve the state of Buddha.

Table 5.2. The ascending scale in Buddhism (Reichelt 1934: 177).

10.	Buddha	佛陀
9.	Bodhisattva	Mo-ho-sa, or Têng-chio 摩訶薩(等覺)
8.	(P'u-sa)	the common bodhisattva 菩提薩埵
7.	Yüan-chio	緣覺
6.	Shêng-wên	聲聞
5.	The Great Arhat	(O-lo-han) 四果
4.		San-kuo 三果
3.	Arhat	Êrh-kuo 二果
2.	Lo-han	Ch'u-kuo 初果
1.	Fan-fu (ordinary men)	凡夫

extends indefinitely. However, in the reference of this spiritual path to the Buddhist cosmology mentioned in 2.4.2, the journey is only made possible when the arena of the cultivation is confined within the cosmological speculation of the Sâhasra-cosmology in which all these cosmological realms and the extension of cosmic time are "oriented" in one single world. Under this world system, the devotee progresses step by step by means of his faith in deliverance. This seems to be the only route leading to final enlightenment. Moreover, because there are no other forces to lean on, the achievement of liberation depends fully on the efforts and discipline of the devotee himself. Therefore, the achievement of the state of Buddha occurs only step by step and the glory cannot be transferred to others. This is what I have mentioned in 2.2.3., being the Hinayâna way of approach to the ultimate deliverance.

However, if seen from the Asankhyeya-cosmology point of view, there is another approach which is advocated by Mahâyâna Buddhism with a focus on the multi-world system. According to the cosmology explored in 2.4.2., there are countless Buddhas and countless worlds all existing in this universe. As has been stated in 4.4., after having attained enlightenment, these Buddhas enter the state of meditation again in order to fulfil the vow of saving all sentient beings. By performing the Ten Acts mentioned in the chapters XIV and XV of *Ta-pan-jo lun*, the Buddhas will transform the *Sahâ* world into a Pure Land (Kloetzli 1989: 94-6).

All sentient beings who live in the *Sahâ* world will either be raised from lower destinies to higher ones or saved eternally from the cycle of retribution. In this case, the means of salvation will vary. Furthermore, under this cosmological system, the devotee, with the assistance of the Buddhas' powers, does not have to pass step by step along a seemingly infinite path over an indefinite length of time to attain the state of enlightenment. Rather, beings can achieve sudden rebirth as a result of the powers

of the Buddhas. This is a significant advance in terms of interpretation of the spiritual path towards the centre.

5.3. THE NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST AXES

The south-facing primary halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple, as noted above, are arranged in the North-South direction along the central longitudinal axis. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, this central avenue, starting from the South and terminating at the North, symbolises the spiritual path of the devotee towards the Centre. In the discussion below, the term "North-South axis" will be used to represent this spiritual path.

As has been explored in 4.3.2., of these two religious terminuses (the North and the South), the North where the Pole Star is located symbolises the Centre of the celestial world. For the Chinese, this Centre is inhabited by the governor of Heaven -- Shang-ti (上帝, "Lord-on-High"). When it is projected onto the terrestrial world, the North resides at the Centre of Earth where the governor of Earth -- T'ien-tze (天子, "Son of the Heaven") -- resides. Here, the governor of Earth refers to the human emperor. The symbolism is reflected in the layout of the Chinese imperial compound where "the Emperor's royal palace, called the Palace of the Great Ridgepole (*t'ai-chi-kung* 太極宮) was located at the north end of the north-south axis of the capital" (Snodgrass 1990: 338).

By synthesising the principle of the established Chinese archetype with the Buddhist doctrine, when the North-South axis projects onto the temple premises, the North, or the northern end of the North-South axis, represents the Centre of the temple compound, and it is here that the most prestigious hall of the temple is located;

the South, or the southern end of the axis, will be located at the position of the southernmost hall of the temple. As far as individual halls are concerned, the higher the status of the building, the closer it will be to the Great Buddha Hall at the extreme North; the main entrance is at the South, as shown in Figure 5.2. In terms of this doctrine, the Centre of the temple compound, therefore, does not mean the geometrical centre of the premises, but the northern end of the North-South axis.

According to the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the Centre where the Enlightenment is achieved represents the final goal of the spiritual journey of the devotee. As revealed in Figure 5.3., the North, or the Centre of the temple, is identified as the "Gateway of the Gods", or the "Gate of the Cosmic Exit". In Buddhist connotation, this is "the Gate that gives access to the Pathway of the Gods (*devayâna*) leading to the supernal realm lying beyond the cupola of the cosmos" (Snodgrass 1985: 270). As to the South, or the main entrance of the temple, it is regarded as the "Gateway of the Forefathers", which is "the Gate that gives access to the Pathway of the Forefathers (*pitryâna*) leading back into the cosmos" (Ibid.).

Along the North-South axis, the journey of the devotee proceeds, as shown in Figure 5.4., as follows: first, the devotee passes through the South, or the "Gateway of the Forefathers", and enters the "Pathway of the Forefathers", or the "Spiritual Path", symbolising his embarkation upon the journey of spiritual cultivation. When the devotee continues to travel along the axis, passing through the North, or the "Gateway of the Gods", and entering the "Pathway of the Gods", or the "Realm of the Gods", he successfully completes his journey. At this stage, he has ended his endless transmigrating within the ever-turning Wheel of Suffering and attained the state of *arhat*. He is now free either to have immediate access to the state of Buddha or to become a *bodhisattva* to aid and guide the sentient beings who come after.

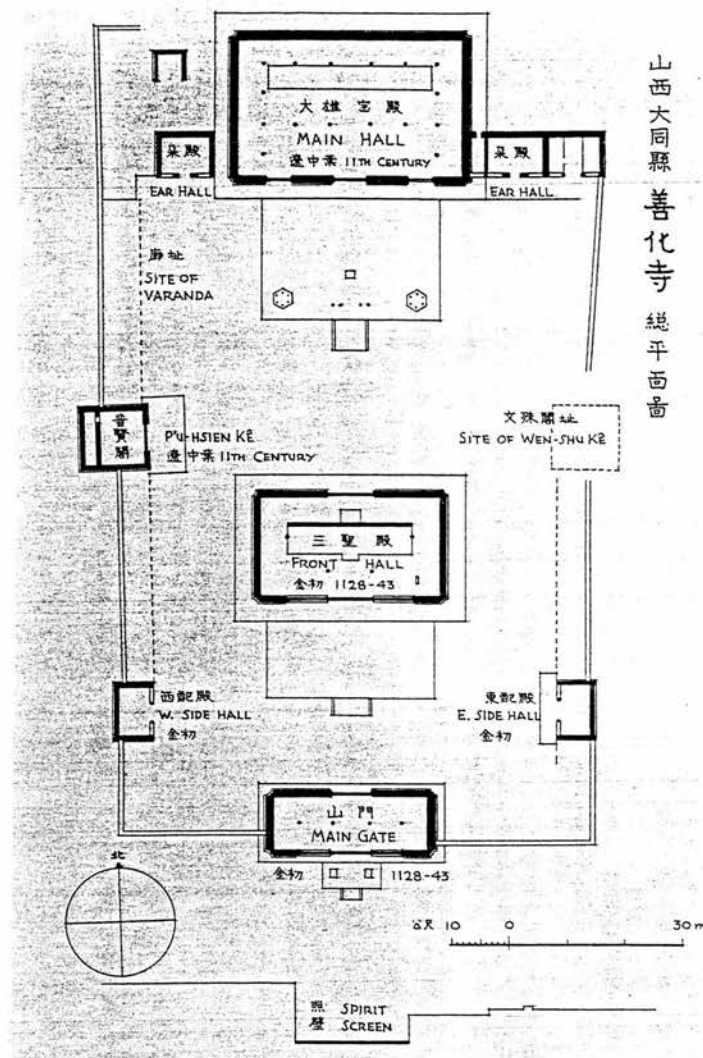


Figure 5.2. Plan, Shan-hua-ssû, Shansi province (Liang 1984: 63)

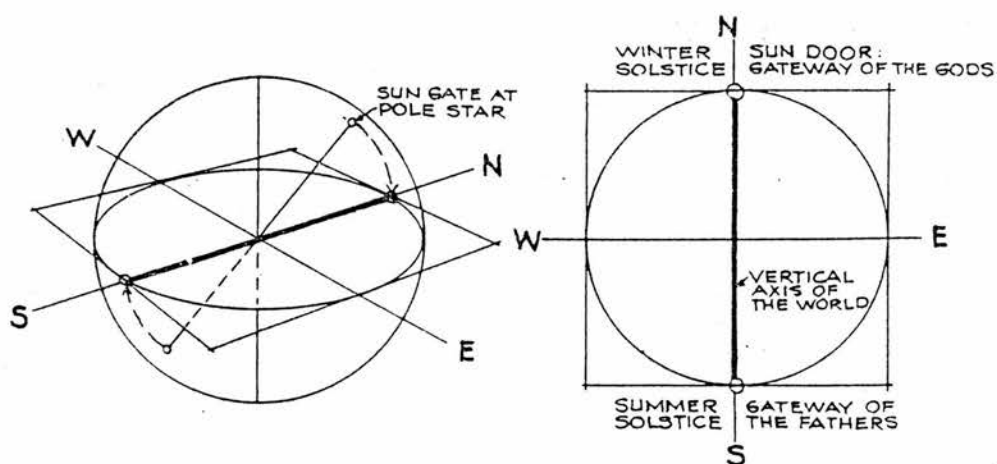


Figure 5.3. Conceptual diagram of the North-South axis (Snodgrass 1985: 270)

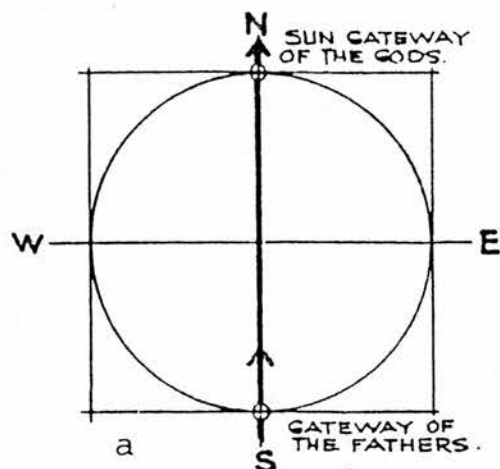


Figure 5.4. Spiritual journey of the devotee from the South towards the North (Snodgrass 1985: 271)

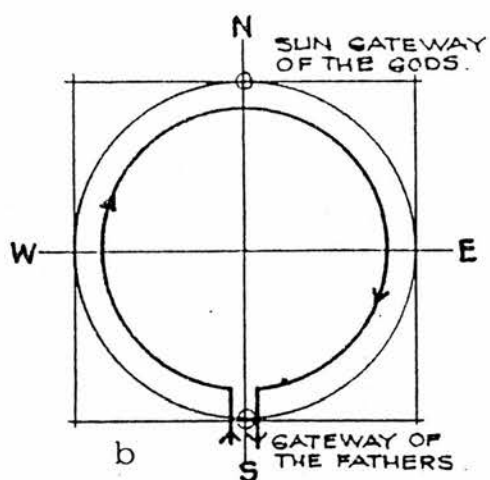


Figure 5.5. Return trip of the devotee from the North back to the South (Snodgrass 1985: 271)

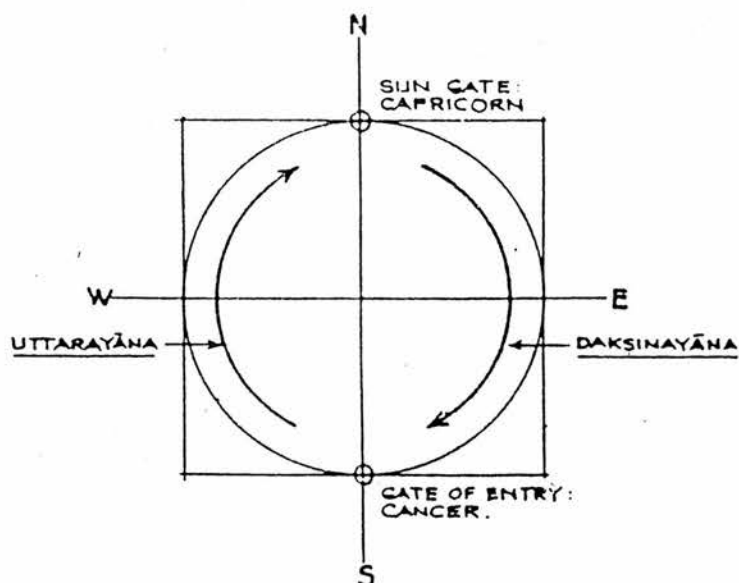


Figure 5.6. The ascending and descending courses of the sun (Snodgrass 1985: 271)

As to those who fail to pass the North, they will fall back through the South again, and reappear into another state under the Law of Retribution, as indicated in Figure 5.5. Therefore, whereas the North is an exit only, the South is both an entry to and an exit from the path, and because of those who do not reach the state of Enlightenment first time, there will be a flow of devotees travelling to and fro along the North-South axis.

The cyclic spiritual journey can be compared to the daily movement of the sun which is expressed by the Sanskrit words *uttara-yâna* and *daksina-yâna*. Here, the word *uttara-yâna* means the ascending sun moving towards the North; the root of which (*uttara*) literally means "the highest point". The word *daksina-yâna*, on the other hand, refers to the descending sun moving towards the South. In this sense, the North represents the highest point of the sun's orbit, and the South, the lowest point, as shown in Figure 5.6. The course of the *uttara-yâna* and *daksina-yâna* in its cycle symbolises the centrifugal and centripetal cosmic forces in action. As revealed in the *Bhagavad Gîta* (VIII. 23-6),

"At what time those who tend towards Union [without having effectively realised it] quit manifested existence, either never to return or destined to return to it, I will teach thee, O Bharata.

Fire, light, daytime, waxing moon, the half year when the sun ascends towards the North, it is under these luminous signs that those go to Brahman who know Brahman. Smoke, night, waning moon, the half year when the sun descends towards the South, it is under these shadowy signs that there pass to the sphere of the moon those who later will return [to new states of manifestation].

These are the two permanent Paths of the manifested world, the one bright, the other dim; by the one they go to return no more [from the unmanifested to the manifested]; by the other they go to return again [into manifestation]." (Snodgrass 1985: 271)

In ritual, the axial ascent from the South to the North is reflected in the Buddhist initiation rites. Originally, the ritual was performed as follows: the novice first walked into the building, or the ritual space, and stopped at the point exactly

beneath the ridge pole. Here he had a second birth, i.e. a birth into the cosmos. Then, he ascended following the vertical axis to the midpoint of the roof, where he had a third birth, i.e. out of the cosmos. In terms of the North-South spiritual axis, the second birth was regarded as the passage of the devotee through the South, and the third birth, the North.

For practical reasons, this vertical ascent is very difficult for the devotee to perform. Therefore, the ceremony is implemented metaphysically along the horizontal North-South axis of the building (Figure 5.7.). In this version, the devotee enters the building through the southern entrance, symbolising the achievement of the second birth, and leaves from the northern exit, representing the attainment of the third birth. In this schema, the *axis mundi* -- the One to the Many and the Many to the One -- is seen projecting down onto the plane of Earth, runs in a North-South axis. As Snodgrass (1985: 270) puts it:

"The [North-South axis] has become the equivalent of the [vertical axis of the world]; the cosmic section has been projected onto plan."

To sum up, in terms of the spiritual journey of the devotee the North is called the Gate of the Cosmic Exit, or the Gateway of the Gods. The arrival of the devotee at the North symbolises his escape from the suffering of the world and his attainment of the state of *nirvâna*. In contrast to the North, its complement, the South, is named the Gateway of the Forefathers and provides both an entry for the devotee starting the spiritual journey and an exit to return to the Law of Retribution when he fails to achieve the final Enlightenment. The spiritual journey of the devotee from South to North thus symbolises the sacred ascent from the mundane world to Heaven, and in this sense, the North-South axis is in fact the projection of the channel of the vertical ascent towards Heaven from Earth.

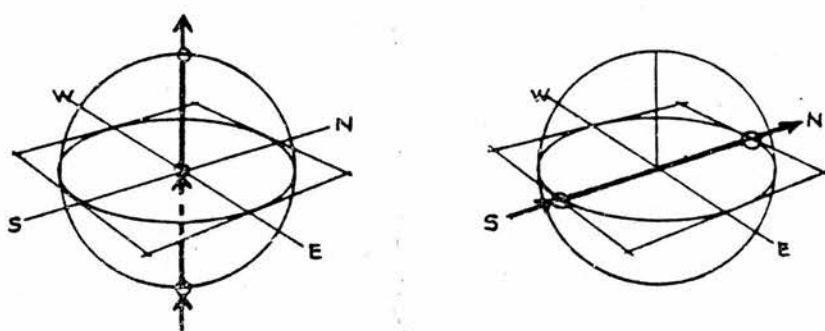


Figure 5.7. Spiritual journey of the devotee -- Vertical ascent implemented on the horizontal plane (Snodgrass 1985: 272)

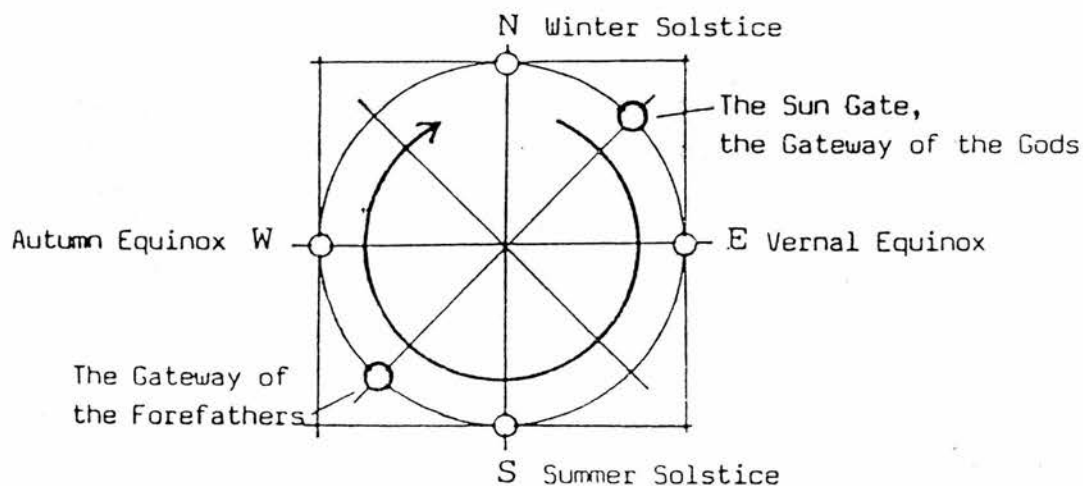


Figure 5.8. Adaptation of the North-South spiritual path (Snodgrass 1990: 208)

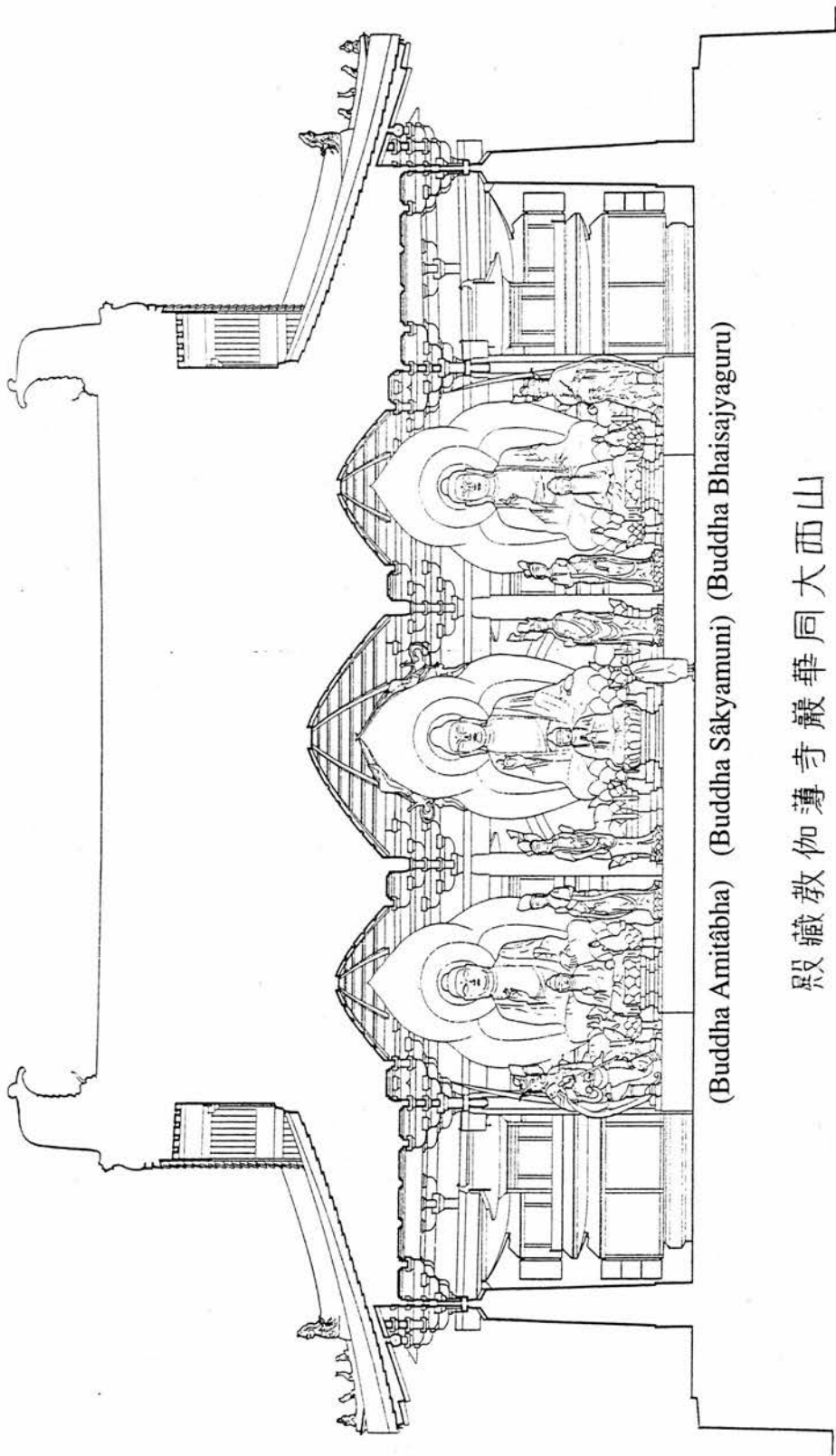
Due to the diurnal course of the sun, which rises from the East and sets in the West, the East, as has been explored in 4.3.3., symbolises the sunrise, increasing light, *yang*, spring, and renewal, while the West symbolises the sunset, decreasing light, *yin*, autumn, and decline. Though the Gate of the Gods is located in the North to accord with the polar symbolism, it is in fact also inclined towards the side of light and life, the East, since the sun ascends from the North of winter to the South of summer by passing through the East of spring. On the other hand, the Gateway of Forefathers, located in the South, is inclined towards the West, the direction of darkness and death, since the sun descends travelling from the South of summer through the West of autumn to the North of winter. In this way, the Gateway of Gods is actually not in the North, but in the North-East; and likewise the Gateway of the Forefathers is not in the South but in the South-West. Therefore, apart from the N-S axis, the NE-SW axis, as shown in Figure 5.8., can also be employed to represent the auspicious path of the spiritual journey, the projection of the vertical axis of the world on Earth. This fact explains the importance attached to the North-East orientation in the plan of the Chinese Buddhist temple.

As to the East-West axis, unlike the Indian *stûpa* whose plan is square with a strong North-South and East-West axial orientation, and the plan of the Chinese Buddhist temple which is oriented along the North-South axis with buildings either symmetrically placed or scattered on both sides of the axis, the halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple though normally in conformity with the topographical situation of the temple and scattered in a lateral group, were not built with much emphasis on the East-West axis (Cf. above Figure 3.28.). In other words, the East-West axis of the Chinese Buddhist temple is never as significant as the North-South axis because of the characteristics of the spatial organisation of the temple buildings. Nevertheless, within the temple premises, the East-West axis is implicitly regarded as a cardinal axis with abundant religious import. In terms of time and space which are the two coordinates of

the cosmos, the East-West axis signifies the temporal sequence of the era of the Buddhist Paradises which are located in the eastern, central and western areas of the axis. The symbolism is expressed by the Buddha trinity worshipped in the Great Buddha Hall symbolising the Past, Present and Future Paradises.

Normally, this Buddha trinity consists of two Buddhas located to the left and right hand sides of the central Buddha on the altar, all facing due South. In Buddhist connotation, the Buddha on the East, or the left, represents the Governor of the Past Kingdom, or the Eastern Paradise, the Buddha in the centre represents the King of the Present Kingdom, and the Buddha on the right, or the West, symbolises the Lord of the Future Kingdom, or the Western Heaven. Within the Great Buddha Hall (Figure 5.9.), the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru is often placed in the East, or the left hand side of the central Buddha, representing the king of the Past or the Eastern Paradise; the Buddha Sâkyamuni is located in the centre representing the Lord of the Present Kingdom; and the Buddha Amitâbha is stationed in the West, or on the right, representing the King of the Future or the Western Paradise (See below 8.4.1.). Here, the East and the West must not be taken geographically. When the orientation of the altars shifted from the South to the North, the Buddha images to the left and right hand sides of the central Buddha have to swap in order to match with the symbolism (Pripp-moller 1937: 206). That is to say, the Buddha of the Eastern paradise will be placed to the right hand side of the central Buddha; and the Buddha of the West is located at the left hand side.

Apart from representing the relative positions of the Buddhist kingdoms, the East-West axis also symbolises the supremacy of the Buddhas over the whole cosmos in the past, present, and future aeons. The symbolism is revealed in the legend of the seven-week retreat of the Buddha Sâkyamuni. As has been stated in 4.3.1., in the third week, the Buddha started a promenade throughout the world. "... He paced to and fro along a cloistered path running from East to West ..." (Snodgrass 1985: 42).



(Buddha Amitābha) (Buddha Sākyamuni) (Buddha Bhaisajyaguru)

大西山大華嚴寺教藏殿

面 斷 縱



Figure 5.9. Trinity Buddha, the Great Buddha Hall, Hua-yen-ssû, Shansi province
(Liang 1932-: IV, 3/4, fig. 5)

Here, the cloistered path is a jewelled portico with ten thousand columns stretching from East to West, and is a great miracle made by the Buddha to convince the gods of the great significance of his attainment of Buddhahood (Mus 1935: 477).

Moreover, in the fourth week of the itinerancy, the Buddha took a walk from the ocean of the East to that of the West (*Lalita Vistara*), following the course of the sun rising in the East, passing by way of the Zenith, and setting in the West, as shown in Figure 5.10. The aim of this promenade, as Snodgrass (1985: 42) goes on to say, is to trace "the diurnal path of the sun that 'measures out' the worlds ..." The Buddha's walk from the Eastern sea to the Western sea following the daily course of the sun, which is seen as the measuring out of the world, symbolises the Buddha's supremacy over the whole extent of the cosmos.

The symbolism of measuring out the world is also echoed in the number of paces the Buddha took to travel from the Eastern ocean to the Western one. According to Hsüan-tsang (玄奘), an eminent Buddhist monk in T'ang era,

"... coming and going from East to West, [the Buddha traversed] a space of about ten paces. Extraordinary flowers, eighteen in number, appeared at the places of his footsteps." (Snodgrass 1985: 278)

If he covered "a space of about ten paces", that implies that he left nine sets of footprints between the East and the West -- each set here being represented by two flowers, making eighteen flowers altogether. Similar to the seven steps the Buddha took at his nativity which represent the six directions and the Centre, these nine sets of footprints corresponds to the eight directions and the Centre. No matter whether it is seven or the nine cardinal directions indicated here, both numbers represent the fact that the Buddha has encompassed the whole expanse of the world. This promenade from East to West again symbolises his sovereignty over the whole universe.

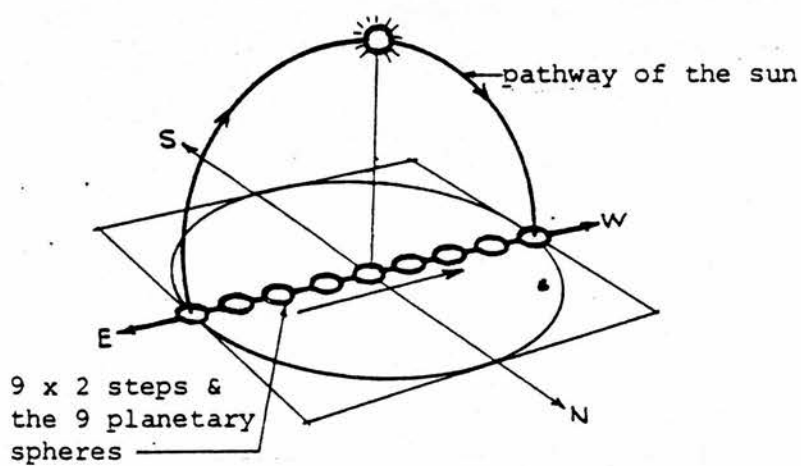


Figure 5.10. The itinerancy of the Buddha, following the course of the sun from the East to the West (Snodgrass 1985: 278)

Apart from the walk along the East-West axis, the association of cardinal points with the Buddha's sovereignty over the world is testified to in references to the oceans in the legend of the Buddha. As revealed in *Anguttara Nikâya* (III. 240), the Buddha "sees himself as a giant holding the two oceans in his arms" (Snodgrass 1985: 279) in a dream. Here, the two oceans can be assumed to be the oceans of the East and the West, so this image, symbolising his lordship of the whole world, strengthens the significance of the East-West axis. As indicated in *Buddhacarita* (XV. III), the symbolic connection between the oceans and the Buddha's dominion over the four quarters of the world is first alluded to when the Buddha bathes in the four oceans before his unblinking contemplation under the Bodhi Tree.

In conclusion, the significance of the East-West axis is revealed in the iconography of the Buddhist trinity on the altar of the great Buddha hall. Here, the East-West axis symbolises not only the temporal sequence of the Buddhist Paradise, but also, in spatial terms, the supremacy of the Buddhas over the whole universe in the past, present, and future *kalpas*.

5.4. THE HIERARCHY OF BUILDINGS ON THE CENTRAL LONGITUDINAL AXIS

As has been described above, the Chinese Buddhists developed the halls and courtyards of their temples in the North-South direction, along three longitudinal axes, the primary halls parallel and being lined up on the central one. These halls, which were built to fulfil individual religious functions, were formulated to reveal the specific Buddhist hierarchy and ceremonial order. That is to say, each hall in the central avenue corresponds to a position in the hierarchy, or a stage in the Buddhist spiritual journey. In the view of Chinese Buddhists, the procession from one hall to another -- a

significant and invisible line of movement along which the devotee travels -- is regarded as a progression through the spiritual stages with the intention of reaching the Centre, i.e. of attaining a final Enlightenment. Of these halls of the central longitudinal axis, the entrance gate symbolises the threshold of the journey; the Heavenly Kings' Hall represents the intermediate stage; and the pagoda, or the Great Buddha Hall, or the Dharma Hall signifies the final destination.

Evidence of this spiritual journey can be traced back to the Indian Jetavana monastery, which was erected by prince Jeta in 758 B.C. According to the Chinese Master Tao-hsüan (道宣) who describes this monastery in his two works *Chung T'ien-chu She-wei-kuo Chih-hua-ssû t'u-ching* (中天竺舍衛國祇洹寺圖經, "Illustrated Description of the Jetavana Monastery in Srâvasti in Central India") and *Kuan-chung ch'uang-li chieh-t'an t'u-ching* (關中創立戒壇圖經, "Illustrated Descriptions on the Method of Setting Up Ordination Platforms in Kuan-chuang Regions"), the spatial organisation of the monastery places the primary halls including the gatehouse, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, the pagoda, the Great Buddha Hall, and so on, on the central longitudinal axis, as shown in Figure 5.11.

In China, evidence of the same spatial concept is found in numerous historical Buddhist documents and pictorial delineations. A typical instance is Yung-ning-ssû (永寧寺), which, as described by Yang shüan-chih (楊衒之) in his *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* (洛陽伽藍記) (A.D. 547), was built corresponding to the doctrine of Ultimate Return (Ho 1992: 331) -- a gatetower, pagoda, and a Great Buddha Hall, were placed along the central longitudinal axis within a rectangular walled compound, as shown in Figure 5.12. Moreover, as described by Buddhist monk Shen-ying (神英) in *Sung kao-sêng chuan* (宋高僧傳) (21. 535), the general scheme of Fa-hua-ssû (法華寺) consisted of a main gatehouse, a Heavenly kings' Hall and a pagoda. These halls were placed in succession along the central avenue (see Ho 1992: 88).

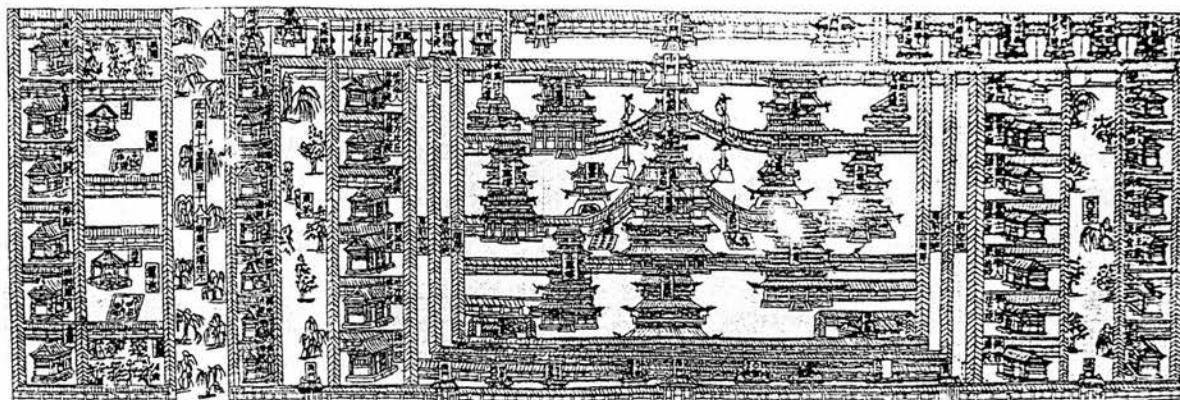


Figure 5.11. General layout of the Indian Jetavana monastery (Hsiao 1989: 64)

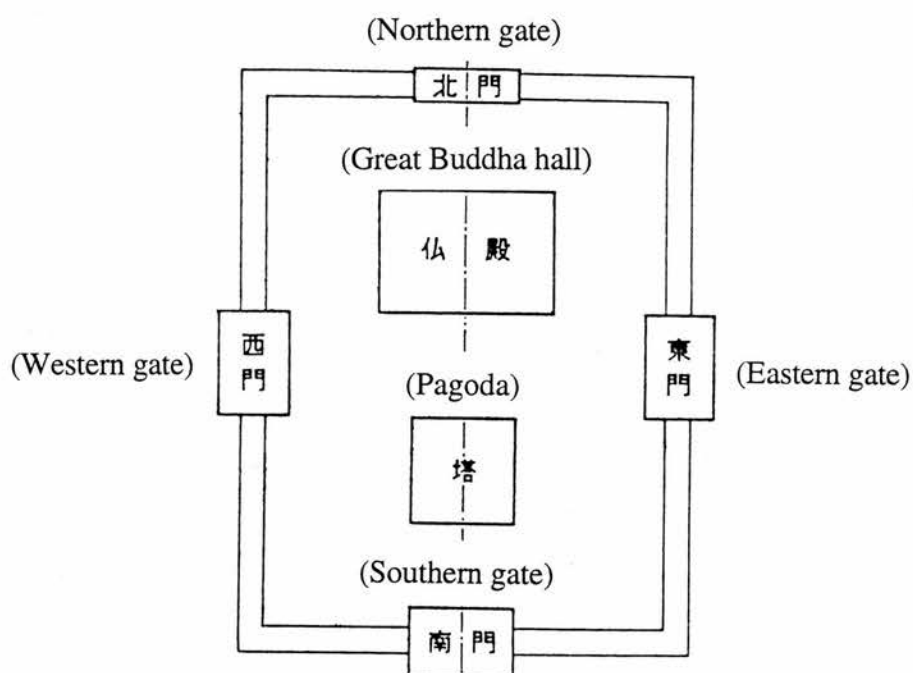


Figure 5.12. Plan, Yung-ning-ssû (Ledderose 1980: 248)

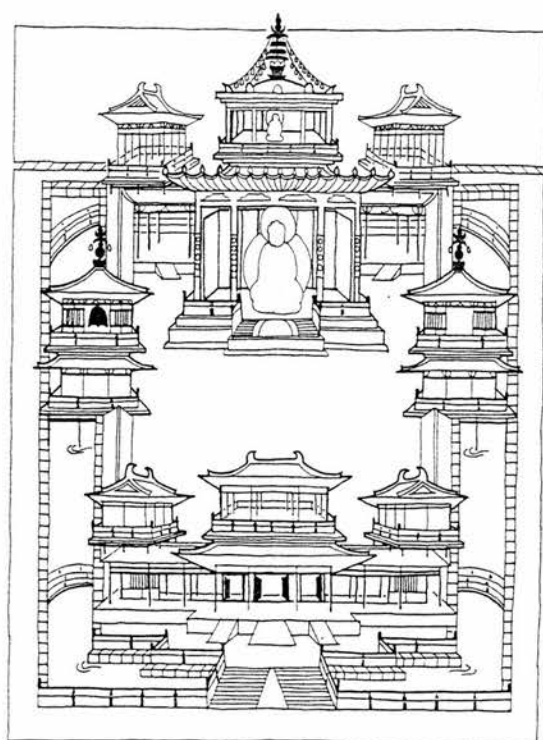


Figure 5.13. Illustration of the Amitâbha paradise, no. 361 cave of the Tun-huang cave temple, T'ang dynasty (Hsiao 1989: 74)

The same design principle is shown in pictorial delineations of the heavenly Pure Land. In an illustration of the Amitâbha paradise in cave 361 of the Tun-huang cave temples (敦煌石窟), the Heavenly Kings' Hall and the Great Buddha Hall are linked by an invisible central line signifying the procession of the devotee (Figure 5.13.). The gate is not portrayed in the illustration. It was assumed as "painted to extend to the front of the composition." (Ho 1992: 170). Therefore, the central invisible line in the illustration can be seen as a processional route leading from the front gate through the central courtyard, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, and finally to the Great Buddha Hall.

Apart from instances indicated in the historical Buddhist documents and pictorial delineations, there are many more examples of Buddhist temples practising the same principles. A typical example of this kind is Fa-yü-ssü (法雨寺) where there is an invisible line on the central longitudinal axis along which the entrance gate, the Heavenly Kings' Hall and the Great Buddha Hall and the Dharma Hall were placed (Figure 5.14.). On the whole, the central processional axis of the Buddhist temple, as Dietrich Seckel (1989: 38) points out, represents "the axis of the earthly world, which, in turn, is in alignment with the cosmic axis (*via sacra*)." In the following paragraphs, the discussion will be focused on the symbolism of each individual building in terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return and the related religious functions each of these buildings was designed to performed.

5.4.1. The entrance gate (*shan-men*)

On entering the temple premises, the first building we encounter is the gate functioning as an entrance. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, as the devotee

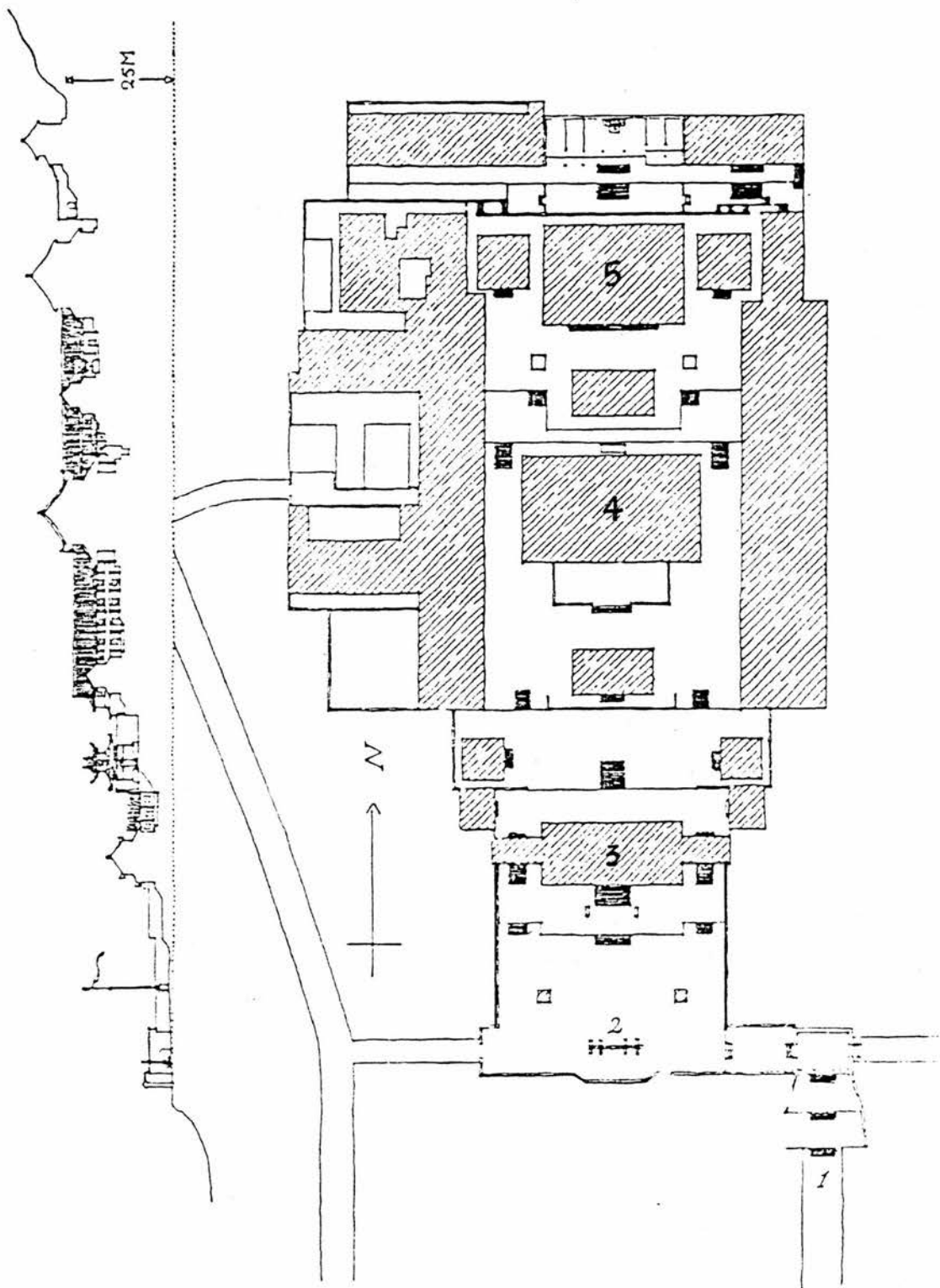


Figure 5.14. Plan and section, Fa-yü-ssû, P'u-t'o (Prip-moller 1937: 94)
 1 & 2. gates, 3. Heavenly Kings' Hall, 4. Great Buddha Hall,
 5. Dharma Hall.

passed through the gate he symbolically embarks upon his spiritual journey. In etymology, the symbolism of the gate can be seen in its nomenclature -- *shan-men*, or "Entrance of Mountain". In Chinese, *shan* (山, which literally means mountain) has the same pronunciation as *san* (三, which literally means three). In this connection, *san-men* 山門, or "Three Gates" is often used as the name of the temple entrance. In Chinese Buddhist scriptures, the mention of *san-men* (三門, "Three Gates"), *san-men-lou* (三門樓, "Three Gates Building"), *chung san-men* (中三門, "Central Three Gates"), throughout the texts of *Li-tai ming-hua chi* (歷代名畫記, "Records of Famous Painters through the Ages") and *Ssû-t'a chi* (寺塔記, "Records of Buddhist Temples and Pagodas"), seems proof of the denotation.

As far as the doctrine of Ultimate Return is concerned, the number "Three" (*san* 三 in Chinese) here symbolises the "Three Emptinesses", a state of mind which should be attained before entering the Buddhist Kingdom, or a prerequisite for embarking on the path of cultivation (*Ta-tsang-ching pu-pien* 19.14; Lan Chi-fu 1986). As indicated in *Fo-ti lun* (佛地論, "Discourse on Buddhist Kingdom"), or *Buddhabhûmi-sûtra-sâstra*, the gate leading onto the path of cultivation is regarded as "Three Gates of Deliverance". In temple planning, the symbolism of "the Three Gates of Deliverance" is reflected in the spatial organisation of the Jetavana monastery where the general scheme of the entrance consists of three gatehouses side by side in the South, and the central area of the temple is enclosed by three layers of walls (See above Figure 5.11.)

Apart from being expressed within the building structure of the entrance, the concept of the Three Emptinesses may also be manifested by a combination of three individual buildings, the main gatehouse, *shan-men* (山門), and the separate front gatehouses, *ch'ien shan-men* (前山門), placed one after the other along the path leading to the Buddhist temple. A typical instance of this kind is the Hui-chü-ssû (慧

居 寺) where there are three gatehouses -- one main gatehouse and two front gatehouses -- in the temple premises, as shown in Figure 5.15. These front gatehouses are built, both architecturally and spiritually, in relation to the surrounding scenery -- they are located on the mountain slope so as to block the road and thereby prevent the access of evil spirits.

In a strictly metaphysical sense, the front gate stands at the exact starting point of the spiritual path for novices beginning their pilgrimage of Buddhist cultivation. In a broader sense, however, gates should be regarded as representing the entrance to each spiritual stage, rather than just the initial point of entry. For example, the gate leading to the Great Buddha Hall represents the stage of *saptabodhyangâni*, or "Seven Realisations", which, when passed, symbolises the attainment of the state of *arhat* (*Bukkyô Daijiten* 1889a); moreover, the entrance of the hall further represents the stage of the attainment of *nirvâna* (Ho 1992: 351). Therefore the following sections will not only deal with the front gate of the Chinese Buddhist temple, but also the gates leading to the other individual architectural elements, each having distinct religious significance.

In a metaphysical sense, the Chinese Pure Land School interprets the gate as the key to, or the method of, cultivation along the spiritual path for the attainment of the final Enlightenment. T'an-luan (曇鸞), the Chinese Pure Land master, on the basis of the teachings of *Shih-chu p'i-p'o-sha lun* (十住毘婆沙論, *Dahasabhûmika-vibhâsa-sâstra*) (TSD 26. 1521), identifies the key to cultivation as *wu-nien-men* (五念門, "Five Gates of Recitation"). He asserts that, by cultivating these five gates of recitations, the devotee will reach the gate of *ching-t'u* (淨土), i.e. rebirth in the Pure Land, and see Buddha Amitâbha there.

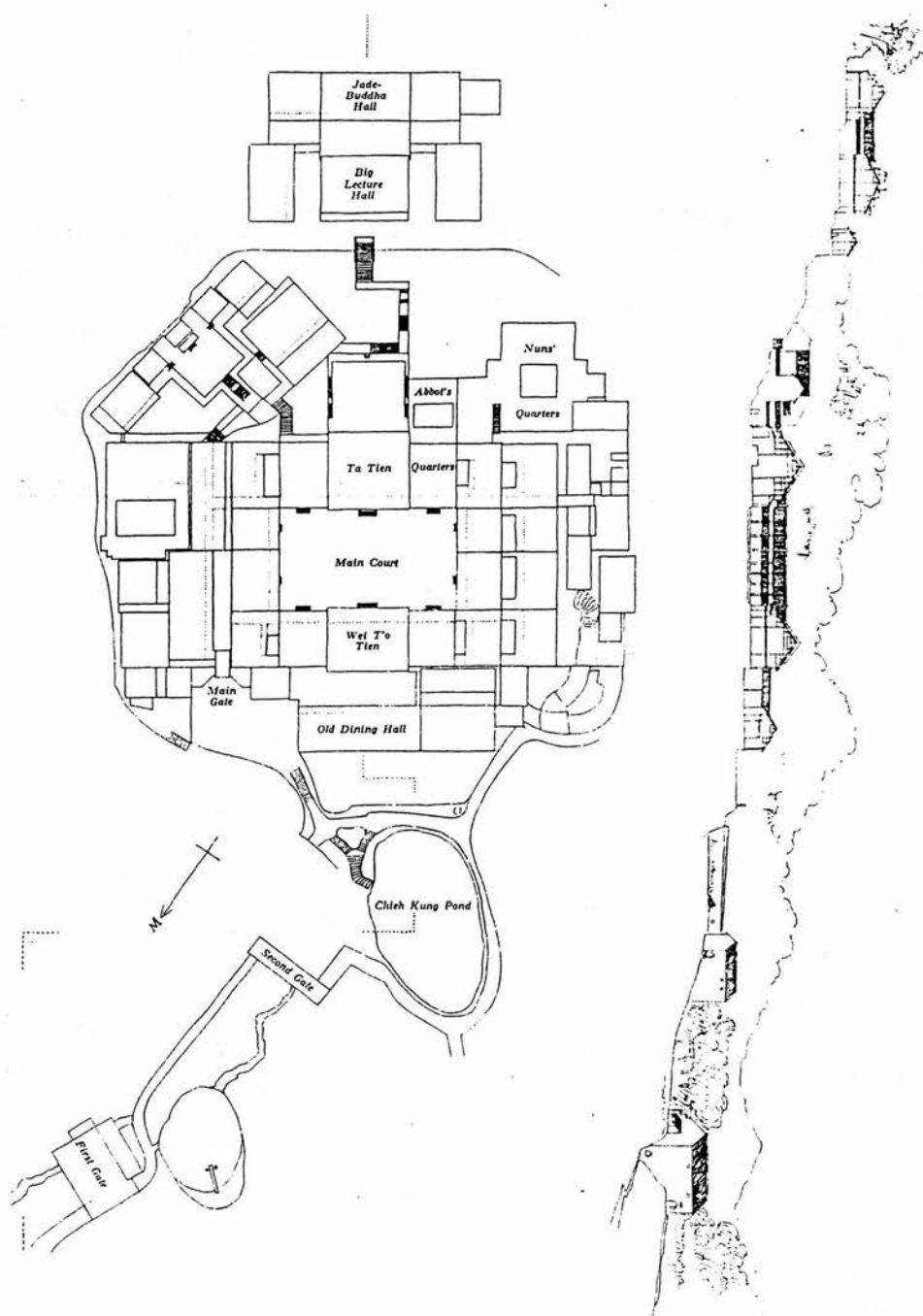


Figure 5.15. Plan and section, Hui-chü-ssû, Kiangsu province
(Prip-moller 1937: 274)

The five gates that T'an-luan advocates are the gates of worship, of praises, of vows, of visualisation, and of returning to save sentient beings (*TSD* 40. 835a.15). In architectural terms, the correspondence of the symbolic "Five Gates of Recitation" to actual built structures is, according to *TSD* (40. 835a.15; Ho 1992: 121. 21), manifested as follows. First, the Gate of Worship is represented by the *chin-men* (近門, "Approach Gate"). Passing through the gate symbolises the fact that the devotee has commenced studying the Mahâyâna teachings. Secondly, the Gate of Praise is equated with the *ta hui-chung-men* (大會眾門, "Gate of the Great Assembly"). Passing through this gate symbolises engagement with the beliefs of the Pure Land school. Thirdly, the Gate of vows is equated with the *chai-men* (宅門, "Gate of the Mansion"). Passing through it symbolises the fact that the devotee has embarked upon his journey of spiritual cultivation. Fourthly, the Gate of Visualisation is linked to the *wu-men* (屋門, "Gate of the House within the Mansion"). Passing through this one symbolises the devotee's arrival at the point where he can perceive the heart, or goal, of his cultivation. Finally, the Gate of Returning to Save Sentient Beings is the *yüan-lin you-hsi-ti men* (園林遊戲地門, "Gate of the Garden and Pleasure Ground"). Passing through this gate symbolises the devotee's successful completion of his cultivation, and he is now free to go out into the world to preach the Buddhist word.

Of the five gates of recitation mentioned above, the Gate of Visualisation, which symbolises entrance into the heart of the cultivation, seems to be the most crucial one. According to *Wang-sheng hsi-fang ching-t'u jui-ying san-chüan* (往生西方淨土瑞應珊傳, "Biographies of Monks who have Gained Rebirth in the Pure Land"), the significance of the "Gate of Visualisation" is echoed in the utterance of another Chinese Pure Land master Shan-tao (善導). After he was ordained and inspired by *Kuan wu-liang shou-fo ching*, or *Amitâyurdhyâna sûtra*, he said that:

"to attempt to cultivate oneself using other methods is to follow a devious path, and to make achievement of the goal both more remote and more difficult. Only through 'this gate of visualisation' [as

advocated in the *Kuan wu-liang-shou-fo ching*], [can one be] sure of transcending [the cycle of] life and death." (TSD 51. 105b.24-5; Ho 1992: 132-3)

Further testimony is provided by T'an-luan, who himself explores the merit of cultivating the Gate of Visualisation, or, in other words, of visualising the Pure Land, the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas (TSD 40. 836a.28-842a.3).

As regards the gate of the final Enlightenment, the Gate of Deliverance, or Liberation, both the Brahmanic and Buddhist traditions refer to it as the Sun. In their doctrines, the Sun is the World Gate standing between the mortal and immortal worlds. In Brahmanism, the Sun Gate demarcates the non-supreme (*apara*) and the supreme (*para*) Brahman; and also "the cosmos subject to the limitations of space and time, and the supra-cosmic Empyrean which lies in the dimensionless and timeless Brahmaloka" (Snodgrass 1985: 269). In Buddhism, the Sun Gate is the end of the mundane world, and the commencement of the sacred world. According to Buddhism, only by passing through the Sun Gate, can the release from sorrow be achieved.

Amongst the Brahmanic deities, the Qualified Agni, the ruler of Heaven, who, according to legend, flies up to Heaven and opens its Gates, is himself called the Sun Gate, or the Gate of Fire (*Aitareya-Brâhmana* III. 42; Keith 1920). Once adopted by Buddhists the Brahmanic idea changes so that it is the Buddha who is regarded as the Qualified One who opens the gates of immortality (*Majjhima-Nikâya* I. 167; Horner 1954), and is termed a "Gate God" (*Aitareya-Brâhmana* III. 42; Keith 1920). Furthermore, from the existential and temporal point of view, the Sun Gate is defined as the "end" of the world. In connection with the same notion, the Buddha is also termed the "World-Ender" (*lokantagû*) (*Sutta-nipâta* 1128-1134; Snodgrass 1985: 269). Of Buddhist deities, the *arhats*, or the Buddhist Worthies, are those who have passed the Sun Gate beyond the reaches of the *samsâra* world.

As mentioned above, the world we live in is characterised by Buddhism as defined and measured, a world of order. Amongst the people who live in the world, the Sun Gate admits only the Knowing into Paradise, not the ignorant (*Chândogya Upanisad* VIII. 6.5; Hume 1931). For the foolish, the Sun Gate becomes a barrier. However, for the Knowing One, as he realises, it is only by passing through the Sun Gate that he can reach the undefined and unmeasured world where he is able to dwell in immortality.¹³⁷ Therefore, the Buddhist dogma teaches us that "For those who Know the Sun Gate is the Gate of Life but for the nescient it is the portal of Death"; but the question is, "[Among all sentient beings], who is the Qualified?" (*Jaiminîya Upanisad Brâhmana* I. 6.1) This is related to the matter of the key to cultivation which I have discussed above.

In relation to the symbolism of the sovereignty of the kingdom, the name *tuan-men* (端門) is occasionally used as the nomenclature of the gate of the Chinese Buddhist temple. For example, the gate of the Ta-tz'u-en-ssû (大慈恩寺), mentioned in *Ta-T'ang Ta-tz'u-en-ssû San-chang fa-shih chüan* (大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, "Biography of *Tripitaka-dharma* Master of Ta-tz'u-en-ssû of the Great T'ang"), is called *tuan-men* which is the same as the name of the south central gate of the palace of Lo-yang during the T'ang period (See *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao* 唐兩京城坊考, "City and Wards of the Two Capitals of the T'ang"). In this connection, the term *tuan-men* used as the name of the gate symbolises the sovereignty of the Buddhist kingdom which is similar to the symbolism of the front gate of the imperial palace (Ho 1992: 238).

¹³⁷ The *Brhadâraṇyaka Upanisad* (V. 10.1) describes in detail the journey of the Knowing Ones towards the Sun Gate: first they pass through the hub of the three-wheeled Cosmic Chariot, then the Wheels of Gale, *vâyu*, the Moon Gate, and finally they reach the Sun Gate where the world is covered by solar rays and they are wholly liberated (see also *Jaiminîya Upanisad Brâhmana* I. 3.5-6).

Within the entrance precinct, an independent building component -- *ying-pi* (影壁, "Reflecting Wall") or *pa-tzu ch'iang* (八字牆, "Figure-Eight Wall") -- is often found just outside the main gatehouse. The *ying-pi*, as Figure 5.16. demonstrates, is usually placed opposite the main gatehouse. However, in places where the conditions of the site (e.g. where there is a pond) make the erection of such a wall impossible, two walls, making the shape of the Chinese character for eight (八), may replace it. These two types of wall are amongst the most distinctive features in the gate precinct, and are unique to the Chinese Buddhist temple, no examples having been found in the original Indian Buddhist temple.

As mentioned before, the temple boundary demarcates the domain of sacred and profane. Inside the boundary is the sacred space, and outside it is the profane realm of the Three Evil Ways -- beasts, hungry ghosts, and damned beings (See above 2.4.2). The metaphysical function of these walls, either *ying-pi* or *pa-tzu-ch'iang*, is to repel these "Three Evil Ways" (Meyer 1992: 78). This idea of repulsion in the context of the temple comes from a belief that walls placed in front of a building can "obstruct the passage of evil spirits, who can move only in straight lines" (Nuttgens 1983: 63). Within the temple premises, sometimes both structures, *ying-pi* and *pa-tsu-ch'iang*, are found placed together, as shown in Figure 5.17., thus doubling the protection.

To sum up, *shan-men*, the entrance gate and the starting-point from which the novice begins his spiritual pilgrimage, represents the "Three Emptinesses", a state of mind that should be reached before entering the Buddhist kingdom. To pass through the gate is, symbolically, to embark on the spiritual path. Moreover, in cosmological terms, the gate also symbolises the Sun. Here, the Sun is seen as the World Gate standing between the mortal and immortal worlds. In other words, it demarcates the non-supreme (*apara*) and the supreme (*para*) Brahman; the end of the mundane world,

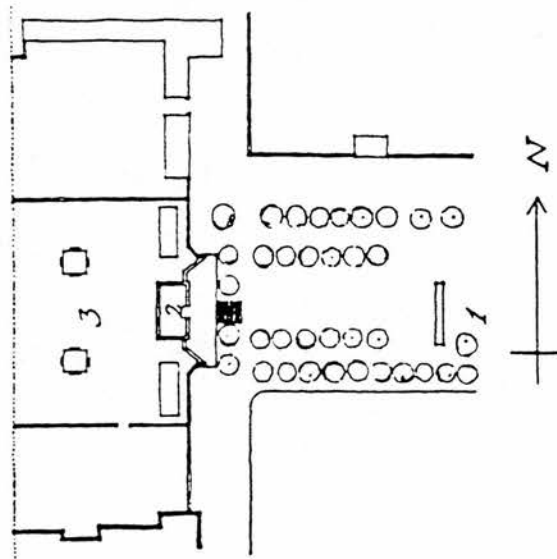


Figure 5.16. *Ying-pi*, Ta-chüeh-ssü, Peking (Prip-moller 1937: 7)
1. spirit wall, 2. gatehouse, 3. court.

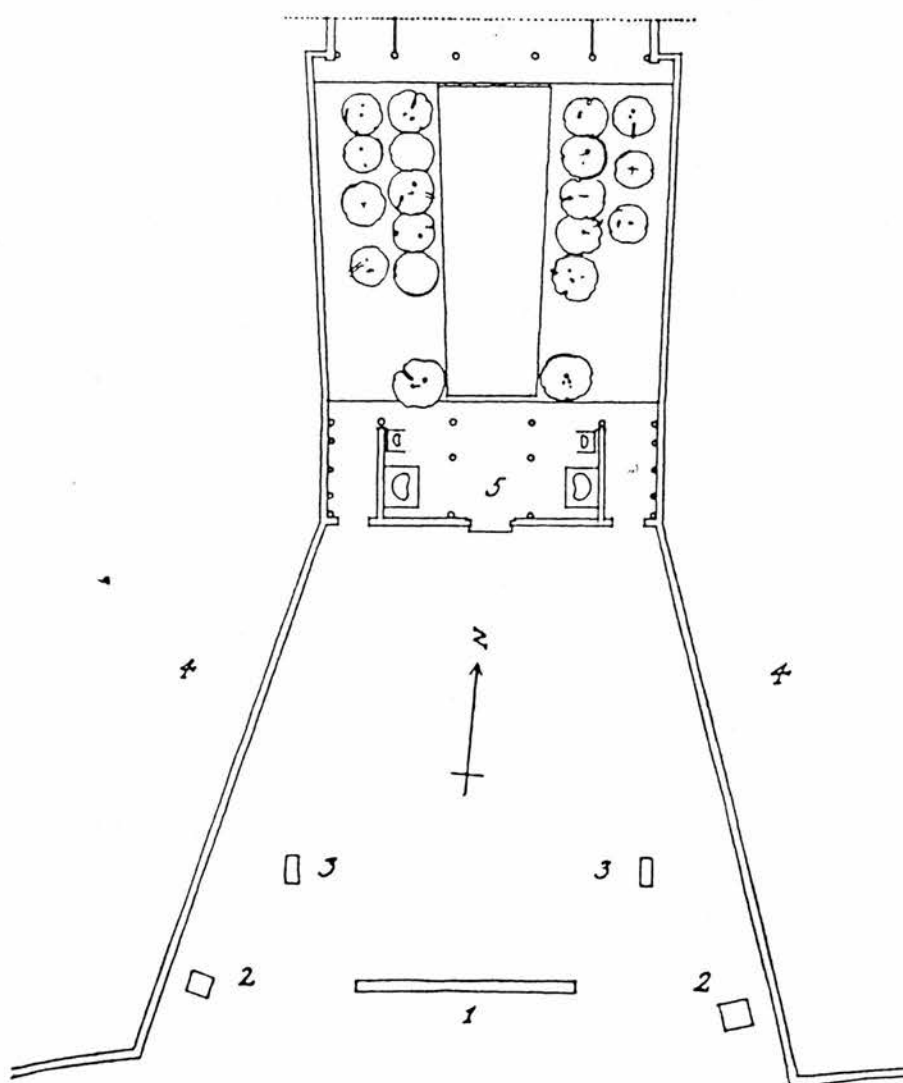


Figure 5.17. *Ying-pi* and *pa-tzu-ch'iang*, Pao-kuang-ssü, Szechwan province
(Prip-moller 1937: 7)
1. spirit wall, 2. paper ovens, 3. stone lions, 4. Figure-of-eight-wall,
5. gatehouse.

and the commencement of the sacred world. Only by passing through the Sun Gate can the elimination of suffering be achieved. For the foolish, the Sun Gate becomes a barrier. However, the Knowing One realises that only by passing through the purging Sun Gate can the undefined and unmeasured world be reached wherein he will achieve immortality.

In terms of the sacred and profane, the deployment of gates at the four cardinal points not only manifests the notion of cosmogenesis, but also the concept of a boundary. The four gates, or towers, seen as the thresholds of the holy domain, define the border of the sacred territory with the surrounding profane world. Within the boundary, the temple is subject to a strict code fitting for the cultivation of the Buddhist. Moreover, since the front gate of the temple shares its name with that of the imperial palace, in the term *tuan-men*, the gate also attributes sovereign status to the Buddhist kingdom equivalent to that of the imperial palace in the worldly empire. As to accessories, such as the *ying-pi* ("Reflecting Wall") or *pa-tzu ch'iang* ("Figure-of-Eight-Wall"), these, built in front of the gate within the entrance precinct, are designed to ward off evil spirits and so to protect the sacred Buddhist domain.

Broadly speaking, the gate also represents the threshold leading to each and every stage of the spiritual path. In this sense, the Chinese Pure Land School interprets the gate as the "key" to cultivation along the spiritual path and so to attainment of final Enlightenment. It further identifies the key of cultivation as *wu-nien-men* (五念門, "Five Gates of Recitation"), or as having five constituent aspects, namely, the gates of worship, of praises, of vows, of visualisation, and of returning to save sentient beings. Among these, the gate of visualisation is of most importance, symbolising the entrance to the heart of cultivation. That is to say, the principal key is to "visualise" the Pure Land, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. Only through this method of cultivation can the endless circle of life and death be transcended. The

cultivation of each of these five gates of recitation together will ensure that the devotee reaches the gate of *ching-t'u* ("Pure Land").

5.4.2. The Heavenly Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien*)

Within the temple premises, the Heavenly Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien* 天王殿) is usually placed immediately after the entrance gate leading to the inner court, as shown in Figure 5.18. Being located in this position, the hall functions as a guard house: its symbolism is implicit in its name. *T'ien-wang* (天王, "Heavenly Kings"), are ranked in Buddhist hierarchy so as to hold a position at the threshold leading from the phenomenal world, the realm of *nirmanakaya*, to the higher world of *sambhogakaya* (Meyer 1992: 79). The procession of ascetics or worshippers through the hall thus symbolises the transition from the realm of the Devaloka to that of the Brahmaloka.¹³⁸ In Buddhist connotation, the nomenclature of *t'ien-wang* is generally given to all the tutelary deities who serve as protectors of the Buddhist kingdom and Law. These deities, although Buddhist gods, are still part of the Realm of Desire, or *Kâmadhātu*, and subject to metempsychosis.¹³⁹

Within the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the group of guardian deities in question is called *chu-t'ien* (諸天, "Spirits of Heaven"), or *deva*.¹⁴⁰ The name, directly derived from Brahmanism, literally means the inhabitants of Devaloka

¹³⁸ According to Buddhist cosmology (see 2.4.2.), Heaven is composed of three realms, called, from the lowest upwards: the Devaloka, the Brahmaloka, and the Caturârûpya-Brahmaloka.

¹³⁹ As has been mentioned in 5.2., only when he or she has attained the state of *arhat*, can an ascetic escape from the Wheel of Retribution; the *arhat* is said to have reached the realm of the Brahmaloka. The gods in the realm of the Devaloka are still bound to the Wheel of the Dharma. For details of the *Kâmadhātu*, see 2.4.2.

¹⁴⁰ According to *Ch'i-fo ching* (七佛經, "Sutra of the Seven Buddhas"), the guardian group, eighteen in number, also receive the Chinese name *ch'ieh-lan shen* 伽藍神, which literally means the god of the monastery, or *samgharama*, and symbolises their role as protectors of the temple.

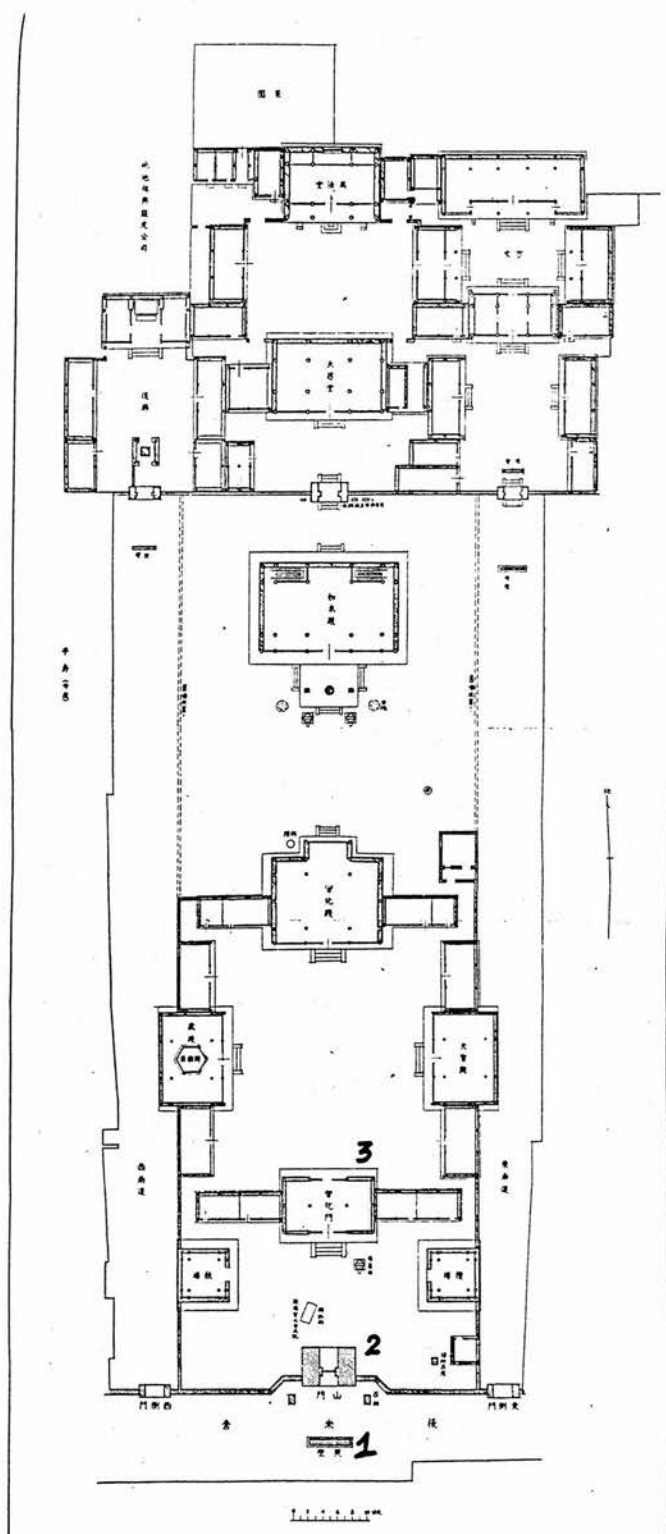


Figure 5.18. Plan, Chih-hua-ssû, Peking (Liang 1932-: III, 3, 8)
 1. spirit wall, 2. gatehouse, 3. Heavenly Kings' Hall.

(Eitel 1970: 42).¹⁴¹ It is said that the Buddha in his nineteenth year of public teaching designated a group of deities as devas at an assembly in one of the heavens of the Devaloka. Before their attaining the state of *deva*, the Buddha asked them to vow that they would protect Buddhist society and its Doctrine.

Originally, the *deva* group consisted of twelve deities -- six gods and six goddesses -- chosen from the lowest of the seven heavenly divinities of old popular Indian descent, which are mostly nameless. According to *Chu-t'ien chuan* (諸天傳, "Biography of the Devas"), *Ssû-ta t'ien-wang* (四大天王, "Four Great Heavenly Kings"), and a further list of four or eight divinities were later included in to the group making a total of twenty or twenty-four,¹⁴² ten or twelve on each side of the podium of the hall. Being joined to the group, these devas also become Buddhist patrons.

In fact, each Chinese Buddhist temple can choose or add as many divinities to the group as it wants (Prip-moller 1937: 44), but the deities in question are always seen as protectors. Therefore, such Indian gods as Brahma, known as Ta-fan-t'ien-shen (大梵天神), Indra or Ti-shih-tsun-shen (帝釋尊神), and the lord of hades or Yen-lo-t'ien-tsu (閻羅天子), as well as the native deities and traditional guardians still important to the Chinese, such as the God of Literature, Wen-ch'ang (文昌), the God of War, Kuan-ti (關帝), and even the Chinese kitchen god, Tsao-shen (灶神), etc. have all been admitted into the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple (Reichelt 1934:180). These particular gods have a special reputation for their ability to protect people.

¹⁴¹ Here the realm of the Devaloka is referred to as the heaven between the Earth and the Brahmaloika (See above 2.4.2.).

¹⁴² According to the first edition of *Chu-t'ien chuan* (before A.D. 1173), eight divinities including the Four Great Heavenly Kings were added on top of the original stem of twelve deities, making a total of twenty, whereas in the second edition (after A.D. 1173) four more divinities were added into the group, making a total of twenty-four. For the details of the names of the twenty four devas, see Reichelt 1934: 179.

For instance, Kuan-ti, although originally a Taoist deity, is as god of war regarded as having valuable powers to enlist in the service of Buddhism (Prip-moller 1937: 204). Likewise, the kitchen god, or Chien-chai t'ien-shen (監 齋 天神), is originally a Taoist deity under the Chinese name of Tsao-chun; however, owing to his ability to protect food, the Buddhists have placed him either among the group of twenty four devas in the Heavenly Kings' Hall or in the kitchen as a food supervisor (Reichelt 1934:180). In their location, representing a sense of security as they do, all the *devas* thus have their places near the entrance to the temple premises and their roles in the protection of the Buddhist Dharma and temple.

To sum up, *t'ien-wang tien*, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, or the Devas Hall, represents the realm of *nirmanakaya*, or the Devaloka which lies between the phenomenal world and the realm of *sambhogakaya*, or the Brahmaloaka. According to Buddhist cosmology, within the Devaloka, beings are still subject to metempsychosis. Therefore, the deities who are worshipped in this hall, although they are honoured as Heavenly Kings serving to protect the Three Jewels of Buddhism, are still bound to the Wheel of Existences. Only by passing through the hall are they able to escape the law of retribution. The procession of the devotee through the hall is thus seen as the transition from the realm of the Devaloka to that of the Brahmaloaka where the inhabitants have ceased transmigrating.

5.4.3. The pagoda (*t'a*)

At the beginning of its spread into China, the pagoda (*t'a* 塔), in keeping with what was traditional in India, usually stood at the centre of the temple complex, and during the Han dynasty (202 B.C. - A.D. 220), these temples were called *fu-t'u-ts'ü* (浮圖祠, "Pagoda temples"), in recognition of the fact that the pagoda was the most

important building in the complex. However, with the increase of Buddhist iconic worship, temple halls began to be built to enshrine the Buddhist deities and these performed the same function as the pagodas. By the time of the Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386-535), temple-halls co-existed with pagodas in the temple precinct, and the importance of the pagoda was gradually decreasing. This tendency reached its height later in the Sui and T'ang periods (A.D. 581-960) and is manifested in the disposition of the pagoda within the temple. As Fisher (1993: 98) points out, during these periods,

"the more affluent temples began to alter [the previous plan], adding a second pagoda and placing the pair outside the central enclosure, in front and at either side of what was now the primary building, the image hall."

As far as the temple plan is concerned, there was an independent courtyard for the pagoda, and, in order to reflect its significance, it was built immediately behind the inner gate and in front of the Great Buddha Hall along the central longitudinal axis.¹⁴³ This was the case even up until the Liao period (A.D. 937-1125). Fo-kung (佛宮) Temple Pagoda built in A.D. 1056, for example, occupies the centre of the temple with the gatehouse to the front, drum and bell towers at the sides and a hall behind it (Figure 5.19.). This gigantic tower is not only the majesty of the temple, it is also a focal point for the whole city. From the Sung (宋) dynasty onwards, pagodas were placed behind the temple halls at the end of the axis as a terminal building (Figure 5.20.), or were built outside the temple complex altogether. In the latter case, the pagoda was often either located on high land so as to function as a beacon to pilgrims,¹⁴⁴ or sited towards the north-east direction, or the "Direction of Evil", so as to block the entry of evil spirits into a town (Nuttgens 1983: 58). Eventually, during the Ming (明) and Ch'ing (清) periods, pagodas were rarely built at all.

¹⁴³ This kind of temple was built from the fourth to sixth centuries and was later passed to Japan via Korea.

¹⁴⁴ The pagoda on high land or a hill peak gave pilgrims from faraway reassurance that they had arrived in the lands of the Buddhist shrine.

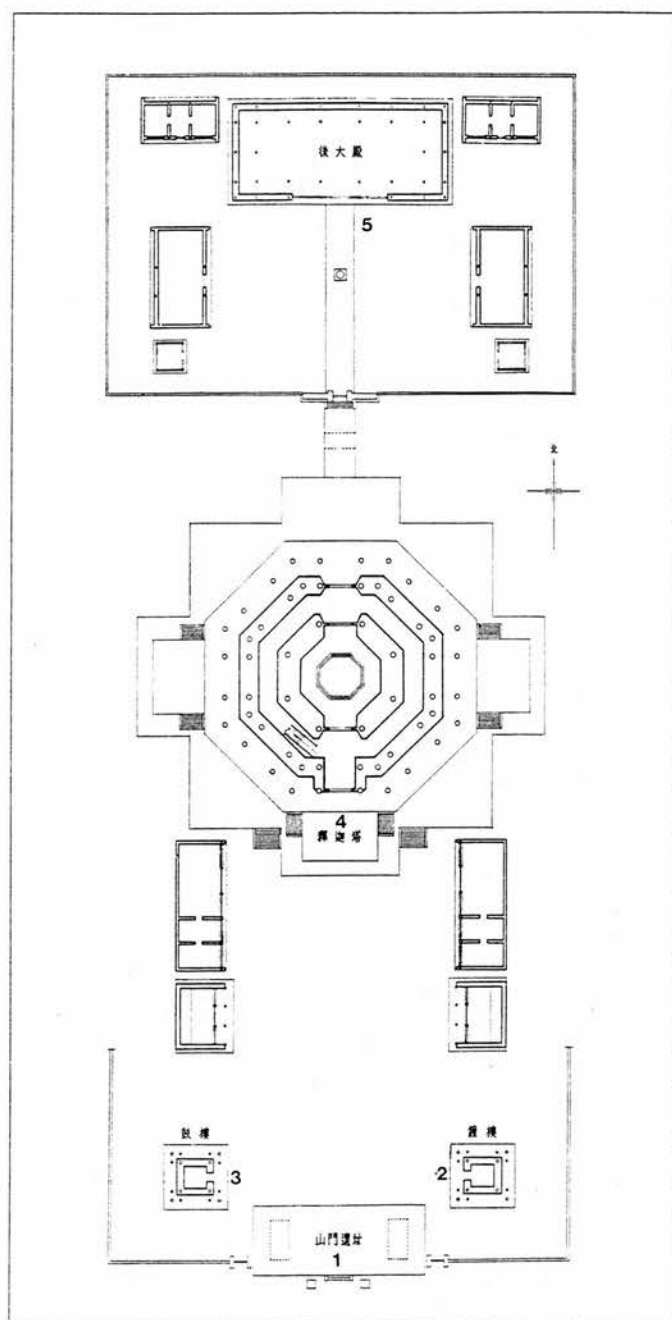


Figure 5.19. Plan, Fo-kung-ssû, Shansi province
(Liu 1989:64)
1. gatehouse, 2. bell tower,
3. drum tower, 4. pagoda,
5. Great Buddha Hall.

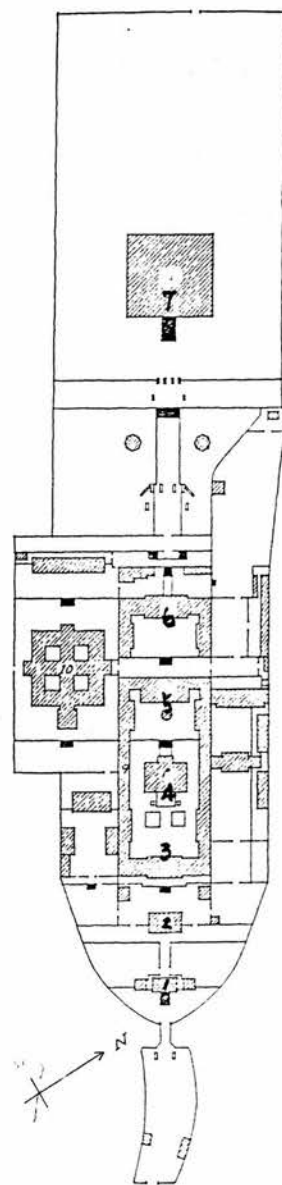


Figure 5.20 Plan, Pi-yün-ssû, Peking
(Prip-moller 1937: 13)
1. gate, 2. Heng-Ha Hall,
3. Heavenly King's Hall
4. 5. & 6. main halls,
7. pagoda.

As far as those pagodas which are one of the main buildings on the central longitudinal axis are concerned, the symbolism is in keeping with the Indian tradition:¹⁴⁵ the Chinese pagoda which enshrines the relics of the Buddha or the remains of deceased monks after cremation, is believed not merely to be a symbol of the Buddha, but to embody his presence. For this reason, it serves as both the spiritual and architectural centre of the temple premises. Significantly, as mentioned in *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (法苑珠林, "Forest of Pearls of the Garden of the Law"),¹⁴⁶ twenty Chinese pagodas are said to be amongst the eighty four thousand *stûpas*¹⁴⁷ which were constructed by King Asoka throughout the Buddhist kingdom for housing the Buddha Sakyâmoni's relics. The reliquary pagoda, or *she-li-t'a* (舍利塔),¹⁴⁸ in the O-yu-wang-ssû (阿育王寺), as recorded in *Kao-sêng chuan* (高僧傳, "Biographies of Eminent Monks") (TSD 50. 2059), is said to be one of them (Prip-moller 1937: 172).

In China, the figure corresponding to Asoka in his patronage of Buddhism, according to *Kuang-hung-ming chi* (廣弘明記, "Extended treatises on Buddhism") (TSD 52. 213a-b), is the Sui emperor Yang Chien (楊堅). He built a multitude of

¹⁴⁵ As Gérard Fussman (1986: 48) suggests, "a *stûpa* is an embodiment of many symbolic conceptions, but the Cakravartin symbolism appears to be the main one." The Cakravartin here means the ideal monarch and the defender of the faith, Cakravartin-râja (Denis C. Twittchett 1979: 76). The Honourable One in Buddhism refers to the Buddha.

¹⁴⁶ The account is recorded in the "Ching-t'a p'ien" (敬塔篇, "Essay of Revering the Pagoda"), of the *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (see TSD 53. 584c-589a).

¹⁴⁷ The *Dîgha Nikâya* (II. 165-7) describes in detail the legend of the construction of the eighty four thousand *stûpas* as follows. Immediately after the cremation of the Buddha, ten *stûpas* for enshrining his relics were erected respectively in ten different places by the eight kings, the Brahmin priest Drona, and the villagers who lived adjacent to the cremation site. In course of time, the relics deposited were miraculously brought together by the elders of the Sangha (*Thûpavamsa* 24), and the pious king Asoka divided them into eighty four thousand parts and enshrined them throughout the Buddhist world (see *Bukkyô Daijiten* 3832).

¹⁴⁸ A *she-li*, or *sarira*, is a relic whose shape is like the small "jewel" supposedly found after the cremation of the body of a holy monk. It signifies the highest state of spiritual life that the monk achieved. For example, by the time the old abbot Chien-yüeh was cremated at the Hui-chü-ssû, according to the chronicle, "a Buddha on a lotus flower was seen rising from the midst of growing fire and a fine-coloured *she-li*, measuring more than a pint, was found afterward." (Prip-moller 1937: 172) Therefore, *she-li* is also used simply to designate a holy relic. According to Buddhist dictionary, there are three kinds of *she-li*, white ones from bones, black ones from hair and red ones from flesh (Prip-moller 1937: 172). Within the temple premise, the pagoda in which such *she-li* jewels are kept, is called *she-li-t'a*.

sarira pagodas (*she-li-t'a*) throughout the country in order to ensure that the entire empire was under the divine protection of the Buddha. Moreover, *She-li kan-ying chi* (舍利感應記) (TSD 52. 213b.25-216c.6) attributes the acts of Yang Chien to his awareness of the Buddhist mission of King Asoka. Here, the acts of Yang Chien are not seen merely as an imitation of King Asoka, but, most importantly, as sharing the same significance, that of "spreading thus [the Dharma] all over the world" (Fussman 1986: 48 and Ho 1992: 207).

In this connection, depositing the Buddha's relics in pagodas symbolises the preaching of the Buddha's Dharma (Figure 5.21.). In Buddhist vocabulary, "the Buddha's body" and "the Dharma", in term of symbolism, are synonyms.

"When deposited within [the pagoda] a relic of *Tathâgata*, whether a hair of his head or beard, a tooth, a finger nail, or even a single particle of his ashes, works as if the treasure of the *Tathâgata*'s Dharma were deposited there." (TSD 699. 801; Tucci 1932: 28)

The sacred relics of the Buddha thus:

"are so many traces of the Truth, portions of the eternal Dharma gifted to men as aids to their Enlightenment.... As a reliquary, [the pagoda] exists to proclaim the immanent presence of these particles of the Buddha's Law." (Snodgrass 1985: 354)

In this sense, the term "Dharma" does not simply refers to the Buddha's sermons (Zimmer 1955: 234), but, most importantly, refer to the symbolism of the Buddha's Law that governs the universe. Therefore, Snodgrass (1985: 359) concludes that:

"The Buddha's teachings, recorded in the sutras are but one mode of expressing this wholly transcendent and essentially ineffable Principle; [the pagoda] expresses the same truth in a complementary mode."

To erect a pagoda is thus seen as propagating the Dharma of the Buddha (Tucci 1932: 27).

Apart from relics of the Buddha or of deceased monks, objects deposited in the Chinese pagodas include copies of sutras, sacred formulae, images of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas, *mandalas*, and so on. *T'ang liang-ching ch'eng-fang k'ao*, "City and

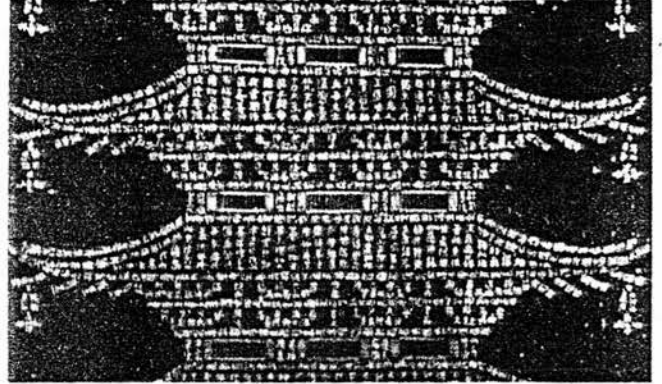
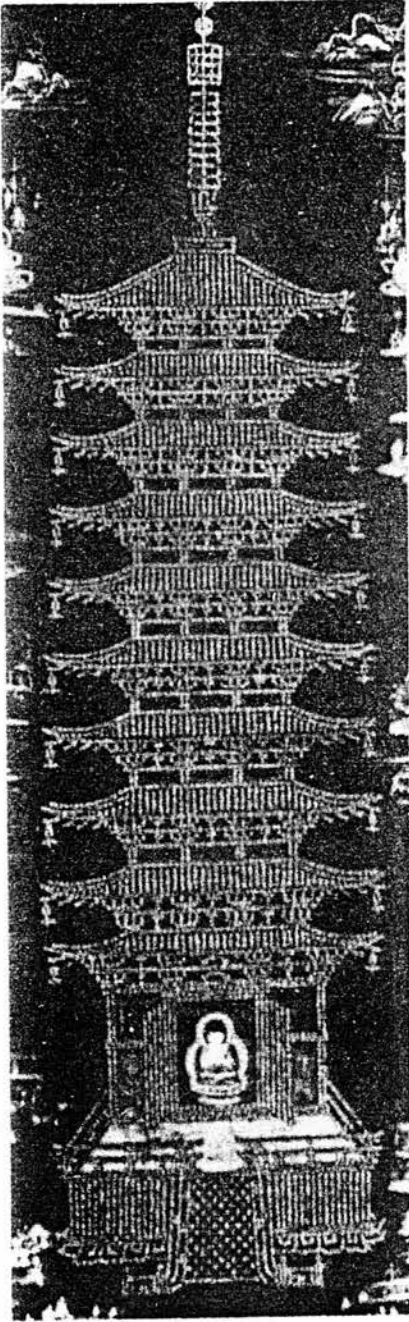


Figure 5.21. A pagoda, which is formed by Chinese characters of a Buddhist *sûtra*, and within which a Buddha image is enshrined, symbolising his preaching of the Dharma (Snodgrass 1985: 371)

Wards of the Two Capitals of the T'ang", (III. 54), mentions that one thousand copies of the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, *Saddharma-pundarîka sūtra*, are said to be housed in the circular pagoda of the Hsi-sheng-ssû. Moreover, as described in the "Stûpadarsana-Parivarta" of *Saddharma-pundarîka sūtra* (TSD 9. 32b.17-20), when the Buddha preached this sutra, "in front of [him], a [pagoda] of the Seven Precious Things, ... sprang up from the earth and abode in the skies." (Katô 1971: 235) Because of this event, the enshrining of copies of this sacred sutra in the pagoda refers directly to the times when the Buddha himself preached it. Furthermore, on the basis of the term *jîvita* ("Life") used in Buddhist history (see *Culavamsa* LXXX. 68f),¹⁴⁹ it can be said that "the sacred deposit constitutes the life of the construction". The sacred deposit, either the sutras or the relics, is also interpreted as "a 'seed' that brings the architectural body [of the pagoda] to life." (Snodgrass 1985: 354)

Apart from being a repository in which sacred relics or sutras are enshrined, the pagoda also has symbolic significance as a meritorious act on the part of the person who has erected it. In Buddhism, in order to achieve final Enlightenment, one has to nourish the 'seed' of the *pradjnâ*, by planting it in the rich ground of merit (TSD 53. 537c. 19-22).¹⁵⁰ As to what good deeds the devotee may perform to accumulate merits, *Che-te fu-t'ien ching* (諸德福田經) discloses a total of seven virtuous actions, and the first one is the erection of a pagoda, a *samghârâma*, a hall or a pavilion.¹⁵¹ The "Obtaining blessing" section of *Fa-yüan chu-lin* also reveals two meritorious acts -- painting images of the Buddha and erecting pagodas. In Tibetan

¹⁴⁹ The text describes how the relics enshrined in the *stûpas* of Sri Lanka were torn out in order to deprive the building of "life".

¹⁵⁰ The *pradjnâ* is the highest of the six means, or *pâramitâ*, of passing to *nirvâna*

¹⁵¹ The rest of the six conducts are "the planting of groves of fruit trees and provision of bathing pools so that the trees will give [shade and the pools will] cool [the people], the distribution of medicines so that the sick may be healed, the construction of reliable boats for ferrying people, the building of bridges so that the weak may cross [the river], the digging of wells near the highway so that those who are thirsty may drink from them, and the building of clean toilets to provide convenience [for the populace]." (TSD 16. 777b. 2-8; see Ho 1992: 74)

Buddhism, as Tucci (1932: 25) points out, there are three acts that will bring the devotee enormous benefits; these are,

"the making of statues and paintings, the copying and transcribing of the doctrine in the form of sutras or *dhâranîs*, and the construction of temples and [pagodas]."

Judging from the texts mentioned above, we may conclude that a common means of gaining merits was "the erection of [the pagoda]" (Zimmer 1955: 234). As attested in the fifth volume of *Fa-yüan chu-lin*,

"the merit of one who erects a [pagoda] at the *parinirvâna* of the Buddha even as small as a mustard seed will far exceeding the merit to be gained by building a great majestic hall for the Emperor Indra."
(TSD 53. 580a-582b)

Furthermore, according to the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, or *Saddharma-pundarîka sûtra*, (II. 50), for those who construct a pagoda, even a child who

"piles heaps of sand here and there with the intention of dedicating to the Jinas [Buddha], the final *nirvâna* will be achieved." (TSD 9)

In this view, the dimensions of the pagoda and the status of the person constructing it are not so important as the intention of paying reverence to the Buddhist cause. As the Buddha says,

"If you all practise as I have instructed, all you good men, you will reap immeasurable merits from the cause of building a [pagoda]."
(TSD 16. 801b.1-3; Ho 1992: 74)

In terms of the relative value of various kinds of religious behaviour, the merit the devotee stands to gain from erecting a pagoda surpasses the credit acquired from spiritual cultivation such as the *dhyâna*. The devotee who carries out this meritorious act will be rewarded with rebirth in the "highest palace" and have an immortal life there (TSD 16. 801a.1-3). According to TSD (16, 801b1-3), "the highest palace" is interpreted as the heaven of the Five Pure Abodes; and TSD (16, 800c.21-23), as *Caityapradaksina-gâtha* stresses, it is seen as covering the *tridhâtu* and reaching as high as the Brahmaloka. The fifth volume of the *Tsa pao-ch'ang ching* (雜寶藏經),

or *Samyuktaratnapitaka sūtra*, even suggests that, "the highest palace" means the Western Paradise, i.e. the Pure Land (TSD 4. 471b.26-472a.2).

Apart from symbolising the acquisition of merits and the consequent more speedy attainment of enlightenment, the act of building a pagoda also symbolises the strong faith of the devotee in Buddhism and the propagation of the Buddhist faith to all sentient beings. In other words, it is not only the builder who benefits from the pagoda, but all those who may be touched by its presence, and consequently saved. This is the Mahāyāna way of interpreting the symbolism of the building of the pagoda. As asserted in the "Ching-t'a p'ien" (敬塔篇) of *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, the act of building a pagoda is seen not only as "an expression of one's good deeds" but, most importantly, "a symbol through which others may be converted to the faith, and a votive offering for repaying the blessing received." (Ho 1992: 75-6)

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, when the Bodhisattva enters the Way, he has to take an oath (*pranidhāna*) that he is seeking Deliverance not just for himself but for all sentient beings. In order to fulfil this oath, he vows not to enter *nirvāṇa*, or become a Buddha, unless accompanied by every last being. This ultimate goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism is witnessed in the inscription on most Tibetan and Indian *stūpas* which says that, because of the erection of the *stūpa*, all beings can attain Buddhahood (Tucci 1932: 30). In the Mahāyāna interpretation,

"whoever [erects] a [pagoda] is munificent, *dānapati*; he is a sacrificer, *yajamāna*. He observes the precept of liberty, *dāna*, and attains the perfection of giving, *dāna-pāramitā*,¹⁵²... He has chosen the good of others rather than his own and has thereby performed an act of renunciation that partially reflects the total Renunciation of the Buddha." (Snodgrass 1985: 359)

¹⁵² The *dāna-pāramitā* is the first of the six or ten perfections on the path of Enlightenment.

To sum up, the pagoda (*t'a*), which is imbued with plentiful religious symbolism, constitutes the spiritual as well as the architectural centre of the Chinese Buddhist temple. First, functioning as a reliquary, the pagoda symbolises the preaching of the Dharma. This is because, in Buddhist vocabulary, "the Buddha's body" and "the Dharma" are synonyms. Of course, apart from the sacred relics, the sutras are also deposited in the pagoda, and have the same religious significance, i.e. the propagation of the Buddhist Law. The erection of pagodas throughout the country thus signifies the spreading of the Buddha's teachings, or the Dharma, all over the kingdom.

Apart from being a reliquary, the pagoda is a symbol of the devotion of the person who has erected it, and a means by which he can accumulate the merits needed for achieving final Enlightenment. In Buddhism, the merit gained from the erection of a pagoda of whatever scale will surpass the credit acquired from spiritual cultivation. That is to say, the erection of a pagoda even as small as a mustard seed will not diminish the significance of the intention of paying reverence to the Buddhist cause. The devotee who accumulates such merit will be rewarded with rebirth in the Abodes of the Pure Ones, *Suddhâvâsika*, the highest heaven in the *Brahmaloka*, and the Western Paradise, known as the Pure Land. Furthermore, in *Mahâyâna* interpretation, which stresses the salvation of all sentient beings, the merit gained from building a pagoda may be passed on to others. That is to say, whoever erects a pagoda attains merits for others by strengthening the faith of existing devotees and further disseminating Buddhist beliefs.

5.4.4. The Great Buddha Hall (*ta-fo-tien*)

In the course of time, with the increase of Buddhist iconic worship, the Great Buddha Hall (*ta-fo-tien* 大佛殿) in which the images of the main Buddhas of Buddhism, the great saviours of all sentient beings, are enshrined, replaced the pagoda and became, spiritually and architecturally, the climax of the temple.¹⁵³ In terms of microcosmic significance, the Great Buddha Hall is the worldly replica of the Heavenly Throne Hall; in terms of the spiritual journey of the Buddhist devotee, the hall symbolises the ultimate goal; and, in terms of the concept of the Buddhist trinity, this hall in which the Buddha trio is enshrined symbolises the *san-pao* ("Three Jewels of the Buddhism") -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In this section, the discussion will be centered in turn on three these symbolic meanings of the Great Buddha Hall.

First, as I have said earlier, regarding Buddhist cosmology, the Buddhist temple is seen as an earthly model and microcosm of the universe (Cf. Turner 1979: 35-6). In this context, the central core of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the Great Buddha Hall, or *ta-fo-tien*, the place where the supreme Buddha, the Universal Monarch, is enshrined, is seen as the worldly replica of *t'ien-kung* (天宮, "Heavenly Throne Hall") (Ho 1992: 341-2). Evidence of the microcosmic resemblance between the heavenly and earthly palaces is given in descriptions in both the Indian and Chinese Buddhist scriptures, and is expressed in architectural features of the halls such as the spatial deployment of the central altar, and the religious symbolism of some of their wall paintings.

¹⁵³ As soon as the importance of the pagoda declined, it was shifted away from the centre to the outskirts of the Chinese Buddhist temple, and eventually placed outside the temple altogether (see above 3.3.2.).

According to the "Mahâsudarsana sutta" of *Dirghâgama* which was composed in the early 2nd century B.C., a Great Buddha Hall, which was erected in India for the Mahâsudarsana, the former incarnation of Sâkyamuni, by the eighty four thousand kings of the small countries in Kusinagara, is said to have been constructed, either the building itself or its architectural elements, from four precious elements -- gold, silver, lapis-lazuli and crystal -- which are the materials repeatedly mentioned in the construction of the heavenly palace in the Western Pure Land (Cf. Davids 1881: 265-8). The Chinese Buddhist literary text, *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi*, "Records of the Lo-yang Buddhist Temples", (I. 22), describes the Great Buddha Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple as similar to that of the palace up in the Tusita Heaven, the Heaven of Blissful Gods. *Li-tai san-pao chi* (歷代三寶記, "Records of the Three Precious Ones through the Ages"), gives a similar description regarding the Great Buddha Hall of the Ta-hsin-shan ssû (大興善寺), comparing it to the heavenly palace (TSD 49. 2034. 102a.11-3).

As far as the architectural treatment of buildings is concerned, the Great Buddha Hall is the one over whose erection most care is taken, as befits the supreme status of the Buddha. In the interior, the roof structure is supported by huge columns placed in rows so as to leave a space in the middle in which a main Buddha altar is placed -- this is an arrangement found in Chinese Buddhist temples all over the country. For example, the central space of the Great Buddha Halls of the famous Nanch'an-ssû (南禪寺) (Figure 5.22.) and Fo-kuang-ssû (佛光寺) (Figure 5.23.) in the T'ang era, is occupied by a platform on which the Buddha images are enshrined, and an empty space around it is used for the circumambulation of devotees. The Buddha platform situated thus in the centre of the hall symbolises the abode of the Buddha himself within the Heavenly Throne Hall.

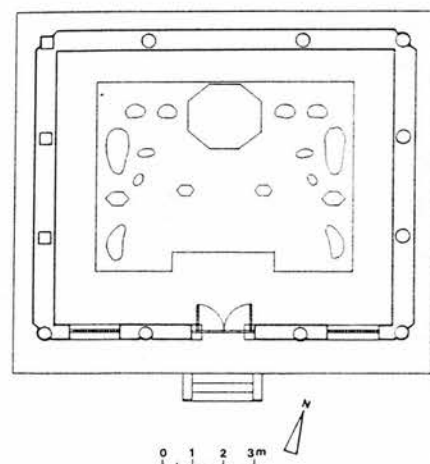
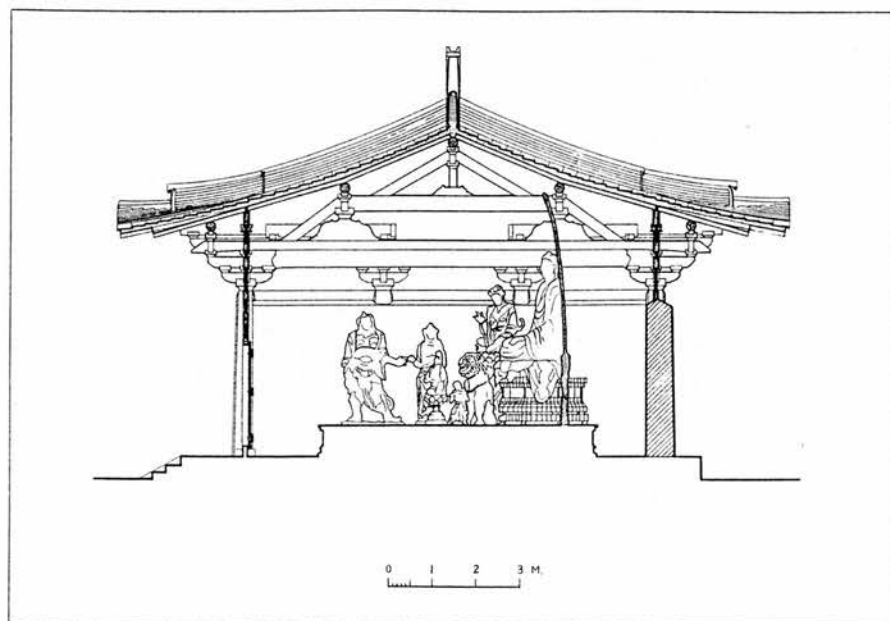


Figure 5.22. Central space of the Great Buddha Hall, Nan-ch'an-ssû, Shansi province (Liu 1989: 89)

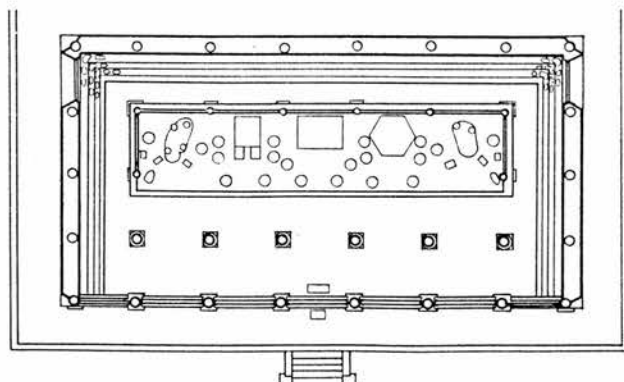
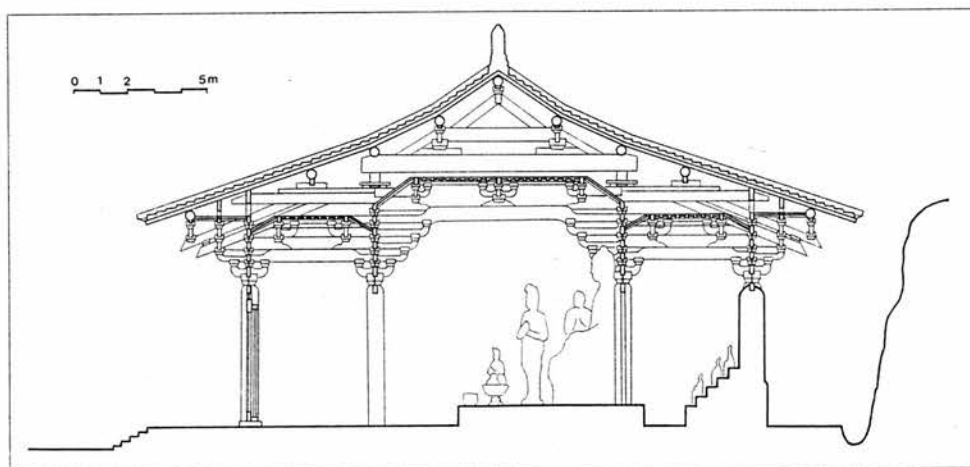


Figure 5.23. Central space of the Great Buddha Hall, Fo-kuang-ssû, Shansi province (Liu 1989: 93)

Furthermore, scenes of the heavenly palace in the Western Pure Land, as well as illustrations of the Vimalakīrti and other deities, are favourite themes of the wall paintings of the hall (*Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* III.: 55, 56, 60, 64). For example, according to *Li-tai ming-hua chi*, "Records of famous paintings through the ages",

"(III. 55-6), the interior of the great Buddha hall of An-kuo-ssû (安國寺) is said to be painted with images of divine beings, of Vimalakīrti, and of *Parinirvâna* on the east wall, and illustrations of the Western Pure Land on the west wall; (III. 60) on the east wall of Ting-shui-ssû (定水寺) was an illustration of Vimalakīrti and various divine beings; and (III. 64) on the west wall of Pao-yi-ssû (褒義寺) was an illustration of *Parinirvâna*." (Ho 1992: 342)

From the corroborative evidence offered by the architectural examples mentioned above, it seems fair to say that the Great Buddha Hall, being placed at the hub of the Chinese Buddhist temple which is microcosmically a universe, symbolises the presence of the heavenly palace on Earth. That is why in the *Zenrin shôkisen* (禪林象器箋, "Notes on the Symbolism of the Vessels of the Ch'an Grove"), written in A.D.1741, the author Dôchû (道忠) asserts that the Great Buddha Hall is seen as the equivalent of the heavenly palaces in the Pure Land, and surmises that the building codes of the Great Buddha Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple in Pai-tsang-shan (百丈山), which are specified by the T'ang Ch'an master Huai-hai (懷海), are in fact based upon those of the throne hall of heaven (*Ta-tsang-ching pu-pien* 19 & 20; Lan, Chi-fu 1986).

Along with its microcosmic symbolism of the Heavenly Throne Hall, the climax of the temple, the Great Buddha Hall, is also the physical symbol of the ultimate goal of the spiritual path. According to *Ta-fo-t'ien chi* (大佛殿記, "Records of Great Buddha Hall"), written by T'ang Ch'an master Ling-yin (靈隱), the hall represents the embodiment of the final goal of cultivation: the *parinirvâna* (Ho 1992: 81). That is to say, the moment when the procession of the devotee reaches spiritual culmination -- the Void, Suchness (*Tathata*) is conceived as the ultimate (Meyer 1992:

81) -- and Liberation from the Wheel of Karma, or the cycle of metempsychosis, and ultimate salvation are achieved.

In terms of the status of the Buddhist heavens, the hall belongs to the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu), the world in which the devotee becomes the Buddha or Budhisattva and from whence he is led into the Realm of Non-Form (Ârûpyadhâtu). In terms of the doctrine of the threefold body (see 4.5.), the hall is the place where the devotee attains the state of meritorious body (*sambhogakaya*), the body which reflects the state of his spirituality, and which leads to the true Dharma body (*dharmakaya*), the body of the luminous spirituality behind all things, i.e. the infinite and absolute being (Meyer 1992: 81). Moreover, as has been said above, the Great Buddhist Hall represents the eventual aim of Buddhist cultivation -- Liberation from the Wheel of Karma, or metempsychosis. Therefore, the arrival of the devotee in the hall symbolises escape from the tie of *karmic* retribution.

Besides the Buddhas who have special significance and are worshipped in the Great Buddha Hall, as Reichelt (1934: 164) points out, there are countless other Buddhas who exist in the universe. Sometimes, they are manifested in the form of innumerable small gilded statues covering the walls and ceiling of the hall. In most cases, there is a special hall, *wan-fo-tien* (萬佛殿, "Hall of the Ten Thousand Buddhas"), dedicated to them and representing the idea of the omni-presence of the Buddha (See above 4.5.; cf. Reichelt 1934: 165).

Finally, in terms of nomenclature, both its symbolic status as the highest place for Buddhists, and the headquarters of the *san-pao* (三寶, "Three Precious Essences of Buddhism"), are fully echoed in the designation of the Great Buddha Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple. On a tablet hanging above the main entrance of the hall (Figure 5.24.), the name of the hall, in honour of the enshrined Buddha, is inscribed:

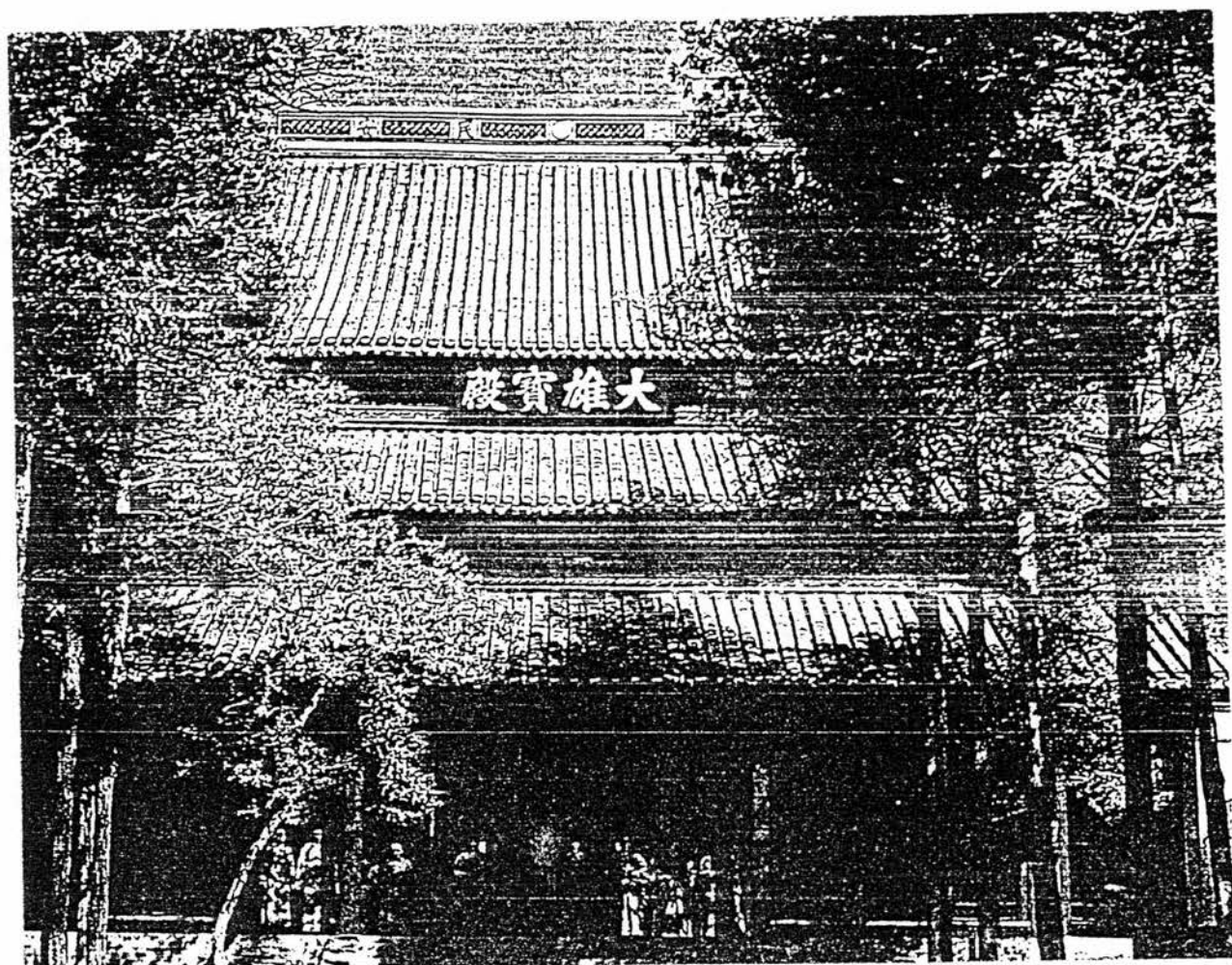


Figure 5.24. *Ta-siung-pao-tien*, "Precious Hall of the Great Hero", Fa-ching-ssû, Yang-chou (Wei 1981: I, 45)

Ta-hsiung pao-tien (大雄寶殿, "Precious Hall of the Great Hero"). The meaning of the name lies in its two constituent phrases, i.e. *ta-hsiung* and *pao-tien*, which refer to the Buddha and the *san-pao* respectively. The symbolism, with reference to the *Pao-hua-shan chih* (寶華山誌, "Chronicle of Pao-hua-shan"), is expressed as follows,

"...in all the Chinese Buddhist temples, the [great Buddha hall] is called *ta-hsiung*, 'the Great Hero'.. [*ta*], 'Great' signifies that everything is included, [*hsiung*], 'Hero' symbolises that a multitude of demons are vanquished ; and [*pao*] , 'Precious', the three precious essences of Buddhism, *san-pao*" (Prip-moller 1937: 206).

Tien (殿) means "hall", or "the headquarters".

A deviation from the common name of the hall -- *ta-hsiung pao-tien* -- may occur on some special occasions when both the honour of the Great Hero and the essences of Buddhism, the *san-pao*, are attributed to one Buddhist deity. For example, the Great Buddha Hall of Ta-hsing-shan-ssû built in the Sui era was named after the audience hall of the imperial palace and the capital city of the empire -- *Ta-hsing* (大興, "Great Auspiciousness"). In political terms, under that name, the prosperity of the Great Buddha Hall is linked to the success of the royal family and the whole empire.¹⁵⁴ However, in Buddhist terms, *ta-hsing* may be interpreted as "Great Prosperity in Propagating the *San-pao*". The phrase -- *san-pao tz'u-hua tzu-shih ta-hsing* (三寶慈化自是大興) -- is interpreted in the *Li-tai san-pao chi* (TSD 49. 102a.10) as

"from now onward, the three [precious essences of Buddhism] and the transformation effected by the Benevolent One prosper greatly." (Ho 1992: 334)

Here the Benevolent One is attributed to be the God of Great Mercy, Kuan-yin (關音), or Avalokitesvara. Because of this, we find another name for the Great Buddha Hall, *Ta-yüan-tung-tien* (大圓通殿, "Hall of the Great Completeness and Correctness")

¹⁵⁴ In fact, this institutional symbolism matches the architectural reality in that the Great Buddha Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple was a conversion of the main hall or bed-chamber of the mansion, when the large residences of either princes, aristocrats, high government officials or rich merchants were transformed into temples (*Ssû-t'a chi* 寺塔記 V. 247; see Ho: 1992: 248).

appearing. Here *ta* (大, "Great") symbolises the supremacy of Kuan-yin; and *yüan-tung* (圓通, "Completeness and Correctness"), the embodiment of the complete and correct doctrine of Kuan-yin. The Great Buddha Hall of the Fa-yü-ssü (法雨寺), for example, bears this name in order to honour the great deity, Kuan-yin.

To sum up, the Great Buddha Hall became the spiritual and architectural centre of the Chinese Buddhist temple because of the decline of the pagoda. In terms of microcosmic resemblance, the Buddhist temple is seen as the earthly model of the universe. Likewise, the Great Buddha Hall, being located at the hub of the temple, represents the worldly presence of the centre of the universe, the Heavenly Throne hall, a representation which is manifested in the interior spatial design and the themes of the wall paintings of the hall. In the interior, the placing of the Buddha altar in the centre reflects the position of the abode of the Buddha, and the scenes depicting the heavenly palace painted on the walls are self-evident testimony to the symbolism.

According to Buddhist cosmology, the Great Buddha Hall is situated in the realm of Brahmaloaka in which beings have been liberated from metempsychosis and live immortally. Therefore, all the deities, including the Buddha, the *bodhisattva* and the *arhat*, who have freed themselves from the bond of the Wheel of Existence are entitled to have their places in the hall. The entrance of the devotee into the hall symbolises the achievement of ultimate salvation. The hall, as a whole, embodies the ultimate goal of the spiritual path. Furthermore, the hall also symbolises the Three Jewels of Buddhism, as manifested by the Buddha triad worshipped on the central altar. In other words, each of the Jewels -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha -- is represented by a Buddha (For details of the trinity, see below 7.4.1.). Within the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the name of the Great Buddha Hall, or *Ta-hsiung pao-tien* (大雄寶殿, "Precious Hall of the Great Hero"), alludes to this symbolism. Because of the various schools of Chinese Buddhism, we may sometimes

find different names given to the hall and different combinations of the Buddha triad. However, they are all addressing the same idea, i.e. that the hall and its statues symbolise both the highest status of the Buddhist hierarchy and the *san-pao* ("Three Precious Essences of Buddhism").

5.4.5. The Dharma Hall (*fa-t'ang*)

The idea that the Dharma Hall (*fa-t'ang* 法堂) is the final destination of the spiritual journey rather than the Great Buddha Hall is advocated by the Meditation school, or Ch'an-tsung. In the ideology of the Ch'an sect, the Dharma is of greater significance than the Buddha image. According to Ch'an, Buddhahood, the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey, in fact resides in the innermost recesses of the soul of every individual being; it is the so-called Buddha-nature, the undifferentiated unity of all existence. Therefore, in order to "awaken" the Buddha-nature, one must resort to the method of direct, complete, and instant intuition. In the view of Ch'an, cultivation in terms of conscious thought and efforts such as worshipping Buddha images can only put the ego into action, and should be abandoned (See above 2.5.1.). Without iconic worship, belief in the Dharma, which is identified as the noumenon of the universe, or the Buddha-nature, dominates the spiritual life of the Ch'an Buddhists and becomes the symbol of the goal of their path. In other words, as far as Ch'an is concerned, it is not even necessary to have a Great Buddha Hall, but only a Dharma Hall within the temple premises. Thus, the Dharma Hall assumes the role of the Great Buddha Hall and replaces it, becoming the climax of the Meditation temple.

The religious purpose of the hall is the propagation of the belief in Dharma. As has been discussed in 3.4., the Dharma, or the Law, is the second of the three precious essences of Buddhism, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, or

the Buddhist Community. According to *Chuang fa-lun ching* (轉法輪經, "Sutra of Turning the Wheel of Dharma"), or *Dharmachakra-pravartana sūtra*, the Buddha, being characterised by his leading role as the active Principle (Snodgrass 1985: 212), takes the initiative to turn round the Wheel of the Dharma, the static Principle, to discipline the universe. All things in the universe including all sentient beings are governed by the Principle of the Dharma. That is to say, the Dharma acts as an invisible frame sustaining the existence of the universe (Guénon 1957: 197f). Being imbued with this religious significance, the Dharma Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple symbolises the supreme Buddhist Law functioning to "support" the entity of the world. This symbolism is alluded to in various references.

In etymology, the Sanskrit root *dhr* means "to carry" or "to bear" and the word *dharma* which derives from this root therefore implies "support". In this connection, the Dharma Hall in the Buddhist temple is interpreted as being the supporter or the foundation of the universe. In Sanskrit, another related word *dhâranî* which derives from the root *dha*, literally means "support" as well. Quoted frequently in Tantric Buddhism, the *dhâranî* is seen as embodying the Dharma essence, and is a sacred word used to hold the whole cosmos in position. Moreover, the word *dhruva*, derived from the root *dhru* which is connected in meaning with the root *dhr*, means "pole". By inference, the Dharma Hall symbolises the support structure of the cosmos as well as the eternal axiality (Snodgrass 1985: 212).

The idea of the Dharma Hall's being the supporter of the world, is not only exemplified in terms of its etymology, but is also linked to the notion of the Voice (*vâc*) of the Dharma or the Doctrine. According to *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, *Saddharma-pundarika sūtra*, the Voice of the Dharma or the Doctrine, by pervading space in all

directions,¹⁵⁵ creates the universe. Moreover, in order that the Dharma be preached, and the universe sustained, the Voice of the Dharma or the Doctrine also gives birth to the Bodies of all past, present and future Buddhas (Bosch 1960: 123). Here, the Dharma, as Bosch (1960: 162) points out,

"is not created by [the Voice of] the preaching of the Buddha but is the pre-existing and ever-immutable Principle that gives birth to all the Buddhas who preach the Dharma. All the Buddhas are one and consubstantial with the Voice of the Dharma whence they sprang."

As far as being the supporter of the universe is concerned, the Dharma Hall is also symbolically associated with Water. Water, as Guénon (1957: 197f) points out, is the Substance that sustains the universe, and pervades all space as do the Dharma and the Voice. The axiom is expressed in the verse of the *Satapatha Brâhmana* (XI. 1.6.24) that the Waters are the Dharma.

In Tantrism, the Dharma Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple is the emblem of Wisdom (*prajñā*). Here the Dharma Hall, being identified with the feminine, static and passive Principle, the source of the Bodies of all Buddhas, the supporter of the universe as mentioned above, is cognate with the Substance symbolising Wisdom in Tantric Buddhism (Dasgupta 1958: 98). This is in contrast to the correlated essences of the *san-pao* (三寶): the Buddha and Sangha. The former, being identified with the masculine, active and dynamic Principle, the force of Presence and Compassion that brings forth the Dharma, is cognate with Essence symbolising the Method (*upāya*), and the latter, being identified with the universe, denotes the union of the Buddha and the Dharma.

¹⁵⁵ The axiom is also echoed in the passages of the *Vedas* that *vâc* "pervades Heaven and Earth", as does the Supporting Dharma (*Rg Veda* X. 125.6; Griffith 1963).

According to the Tantric doctrine, the final Enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) is achieved by the co-operation of Method and Wisdom which, as Dasgupta (1958: 4) points out, is expressed as follows:

"Wisdom... is pure Consciousness, the supreme Cognition; Method... the 'actionless activity' of the Buddha who descends into the world to work here for the Enlightenment of all beings. Wisdom is [thus] identified with the Void (*sûntaya*), and Method, which acts from Compassion for the suffering of beings, is identified with universal Compassion (*karunâ*)."

The Dharma Hall, the emblem of Wisdom, symbolic creator of the universe, and source of the Bodies of the Buddha, is denoted as the Mother of the Three Worlds,¹⁵⁶ the Mother of the Gods and the Mother of the Buddhas who gives birth to the primordial Buddha,¹⁵⁷ and joins with him in union to create the Sangha (Snodgrass 1985: 214).

With regards to the belief of the *mandala*, the Dharma Hall, being conceived of as spiritually pervading the universe as described above, correlates with the *Garbhakosa-mandala* ("Matrix World Mandala", or "Womb World Mandala"), in terms of the latter's representation of *li* (理), the Void-Principle or "inner Law" of things that contains, sustains and gives birth to all things of the world (*Mikkyô Daijiten* 2271). *Li*, as revealed in the Hua-yen (華嚴) doctrine, has no form of its own but causes the plentitude of things that constitute the phenomenal world. *Li* therefore is identified here as having an "all-pervading, unobstructed and omnipresent" character and "is immanent within all the forms of the cosmos." (Snodgrass 1985: 214-6) But despite being fused within the *li*, which is conceived of as the "vertical" dimension, every phenomenon is technically described as having a "horizontal identity" (Snodgrass 1985: 216). That is to say, each individual phenomenon retains its own distinct and dissimilar identity. In Buddhist terminology, this speciality, diversity and

¹⁵⁶ The Three Worlds denoted here are the worlds of the past, the present and the future.

¹⁵⁷ In Tantric designation, the Mother of the Buddhas is called Âdi-Prajnâ and the primordial Buddha she created is named Âdi-Buddha (see Dasgupta 1958: 341).

disintegration of individual phenomena, which are at the same time unified by their essence and origin, the "*li*", is envisaged in terms of a lotus flower, which opens into many distinct petals.

According to the Hua-yen doctrine, individual phenomena cannot exist independently, and each possesses an inner noumenon, i.e. the Buddha nature. In this view, all phenomena that fill the universe are in fact manifestations of the noumenon, their sacred origin. In order to distinguish the mutable aspect of phenomena from the immutability of the noumena, the *Vajra-dhâhu mandala* ("Diamond World Mandala"), is employed to implement what is called "the mission of the vertical differentiation". The reason for this is that *vajra* ("Diamond") is indestructable and immutable, and as such represents the Buddha Knowledge that can bring the noumena forth from the distinctive phenomena within the *li*. A system is thus established with everything leading to the inner centre, the immutable noumenon. From the union of the Buddha Knowledge and the *li*, or the Diamond and the Lotus, issue forth the general and the special, the similar and the diverse, and the integrated and the disintegrated existence. The flaming diamond supported on a lotus, frequently depicted in Buddhist iconography, represents this union.

Being the centre of the temple, the Dharma Hall becomes a worldly replica of the heavenly palace and audience hall. That is to say, in terms of the symbolism of sovereignty, there is no difference between this and the correlation between the Great Buddha Hall and the heavenly palace described above. As revealed in *Ting-sheng-wang ku-shih ching* (頂生王故事經) (TSD I. 823c. 10-17), the Dharma Hall, which is designated as *Shan-fa Chiang-t'ang* (善法講堂, "Lecture Hall of Good Dharma"), is identified with the throne hall of the heavenly emperor Sakra. Moreover, both *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* (佛祖統紀) (TSD 49. 308a. 3-4) and *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (TSD 53. 289a. 14) issue similar descriptions of the Dharma Hall, which they also refer to as *Shan-fa*

chiang-t'ung, saying that it is located at the Trâyastrimsa Heaven, the second level of the Devaloka, on the summit of Mt. Meru where dwelt the thirty three gods (*devas*) of the Vedas dwell. The Dharma Hall is said to be very sumptuous, surrounded by four gardens and one hundred platforms in the cardinal direction, and all the platforms, the gardens and the Dharma Hall are made of precious jewels.

As to the resemblance between the sovereign symbolism of the Dharma Hall and the imperial audience hall, the Dharma Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple, as indicated in *Ta-tsang-ching pu-pien* (大藏經補編) (19. 20), is built in imitation of T'ai-chi-tien (太極殿, "Hall of Ultimate Supremacy"), the audience hall of the imperial palace in the capital city Chang-an during the early years of the T'ang era, where important state activities and ceremonies took place. In this context, the Dharma Hall has, both in terms of its symbolism and its grandeur, supreme status within the temple premises.

Following the doctrine of iconoclasm preached by the monks of the Ch'an school, the Dharma Hall becomes the symbol of the ultimate goal of the spiritual path, and centre of the temple complex. The Dharma here is interpreted as the Law, the Doctrine, and the Truth (See above 3.4.). As far as the Law is concerned, the Dharma is interpreted as the static Principle preached by the Buddha, and the active Principle, to discipline and support the universe. In etymological terms, the symbolism is echoed in its Sanskrit root *dhr* which means "to carry or to bear". Moreover, in connection with the root *dhru*, the Dharma also signifies "the pole". The Dharma Hall, as a whole, symbolises the supreme Buddhist Law functioning to "support" the existence of the universe, and, by inference, the eternal axiality. Furthermore, in keeping with its role as foundation or supporter, the Dharma is also linked to Water, the Substance that sustains the universe.

In terms of Doctrine, the Dharma is identified as the Voice of the Dharma that pervades space in all directions. In this context, the Dharma Hall is seen as a progenitive centre from which all past, present, and future Buddhas who preach the Law are created. The "Voice" here is interpreted as the immutable Principle that gave birth to the Bodies of the Buddha, rather than the voice preaching the sutras. In Tantrism, in connection with the notion of the progentive centre, the Dharma Hall is identified as the Mother of the past, present and future worlds, the Mother of the Gods and the Mother of the Buddhas who gave birth to the primordial Buddha.

Moreover, in terms of the Truth, the Dharma, in Tantrism, is revealed as the Wisdom, and the Buddha as the Method. According to Tantric doctrine, the Wisdom symbolises the pure Consciousness, the supreme Cognition, or the Void (*sûntaya*); the Method, or the universal Compassion (*karunâ*), is that which is performed by the Buddha for the Enlightenment of suffering beings. It is by the unity of the Wisdom and the Method that the final Enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) is achieved. In the interpretation of the Hua-yen sect, the Dharma is identified as *li* (理), the Void-Principle, the "inner Law" of things, or the noumenon, that causes the phenomenal world to appear; whereas the Buddha is the Diamond, or the Buddha Knowledge. According to the Hua-yen doctrine, by means of the Buddha Knowledge, the noumena (*li*) can be brought forth from distinctive phenomena. Therefore, from the union of the Buddha Knowledge and the *li*, or the Diamond and the noumenon, the Truth will be revealed. The Dharma Hall, as a whole, is an emblem both of the Wisdom and of *li*.

5.5. *AXIS MUNDI* AND BUDDHIST CREMATION AND MEDITATION

-- ULTIMATE RETURN BY FLAMES

In China, the introduction of cremation as a method of disposal of the dead is closely connected with the arrival of Buddhism. As addressed in *Kao-sêng chuan* (III. 15a), the Indian monk Gunavarman, who died in China in A.D. 431, followed "the foreign way" of being cremated (Prip-moller 1937: 171 and Groot 1910: III. 1411). Here, "the foreign way" indicates that cremation was new to the Chinese. Moreover, in the same historical document (XIV. 26), when a native monk Seng Sheng (僧 晨) was about to die, he gave instructions to his disciples that "After I have died, cremate my body". These two instances recorded in *Kao-sêng chuan* reveal that cremation has been practised in the Chinese Buddhist world since the fifth century.

In Buddhism, the doctrinal basis of the practice lies in the doctrine of the threefold body of the Buddha (*san-shen* 三 身, *trikâya*) (Eitel 1970: 108 and Reichelt 1934: 32). Of these bodily forms, the first form of the Buddha is his illusory body in which he appeared to the eyes of men (*nirmâna-kâya*), i.e. the apparitional humanised form (*hua-shen* 化 身). This body, or form of appearance, is assumed with the aim of propagating Buddhism. The second form is the meritorious body of the Buddha (*sambhoga-kâya*), i.e. the blissful supermundane form (*pao-shen* 報 身). This body is a spiritual form which reflects his accumulated merits. The third form is the true Dharma body of the Buddha (*dharma-kâya*), i.e. the luminous Dharma form (*hua-shen* 法 身). This body is the luminous spirituality behind all things. According to this doctrine, the Buddha is capable of assuming any of these forms and, in fact, he is really only expressed to the full by a unity of all three. The name of the Chinese pagoda -- *p'u-t'ung-t'a* (普 同 塔, "Tower of Universal Unity"), which was built to

deposit the ashes from cremation (Figure 5.25.) -- bears witness to the unity and the transformation (Prip-moller 1937: 172f).¹⁵⁸

Moreover, as indicated in *Ch'i-hsin lun* (起信論, "Discourse on the Awakening of Faith"), or *Sraddhotpâda-sâstra*, the threefold body of the Buddha is also regarded as an expression of the three spiritual powers of the Buddha which act behind the visible universe. Among these, the first power represents the underlying essence (*t'i* 體, "Essence"); the second, the different manifestations of that essence (*hsiang* 相, "Image"); the third, the essence in action (*yung* 用, "Energy Working Through the Universe") (Reichelt 1934: 186). Here, the essence in action (*yung*) corresponds to the apparitional humanised form (*hua-shen*); the different manifestations of that essence (*hsiang*) equate to the blissful supermundane form (*pao-shen*); and the underlying essence (*t'i*) corresponds to the luminous Dharma form (*hua-shen*).

In cremation, when the apparitional humanised form (*hua-shen*) of the Buddha is destroyed by fire, the bodily form is said to have automatically transmitted to the meritorious body of the Buddha (*pao-shen*). When the meritorious body of the Buddha is consumed, the true Dharma body of the Buddha (*hua-shen*) is revealed (Prip-moller 1937: 165). In other words, the cremation of the Buddha transmutes his bodily form from the lowest *nirmâna-kâya* to the highest *dharma-kâya*. On this doctrinal basis, cremation is regarded as a process of purification by the devotee. In the course of combustion, the fire will "burn away" all the impediments in the way of the attainment of Enlightenment. Thus, the fire is an aid towards achieving

¹⁵⁸ In this tower, because of the Buddha's ability to incarnated himself into a being of either of the three levels, the relics of the abbots, monks, and novices are all enshrined together. The tower is also called *hai-hui-t'a* (海會塔, "Tower of Assembly of the Holy"). Here, according to *Hua-yen ching*, "*hai* (海) is the Sea of Virtue, but means also an Assembly of the Holy." (Prip-moller 1937: 175)

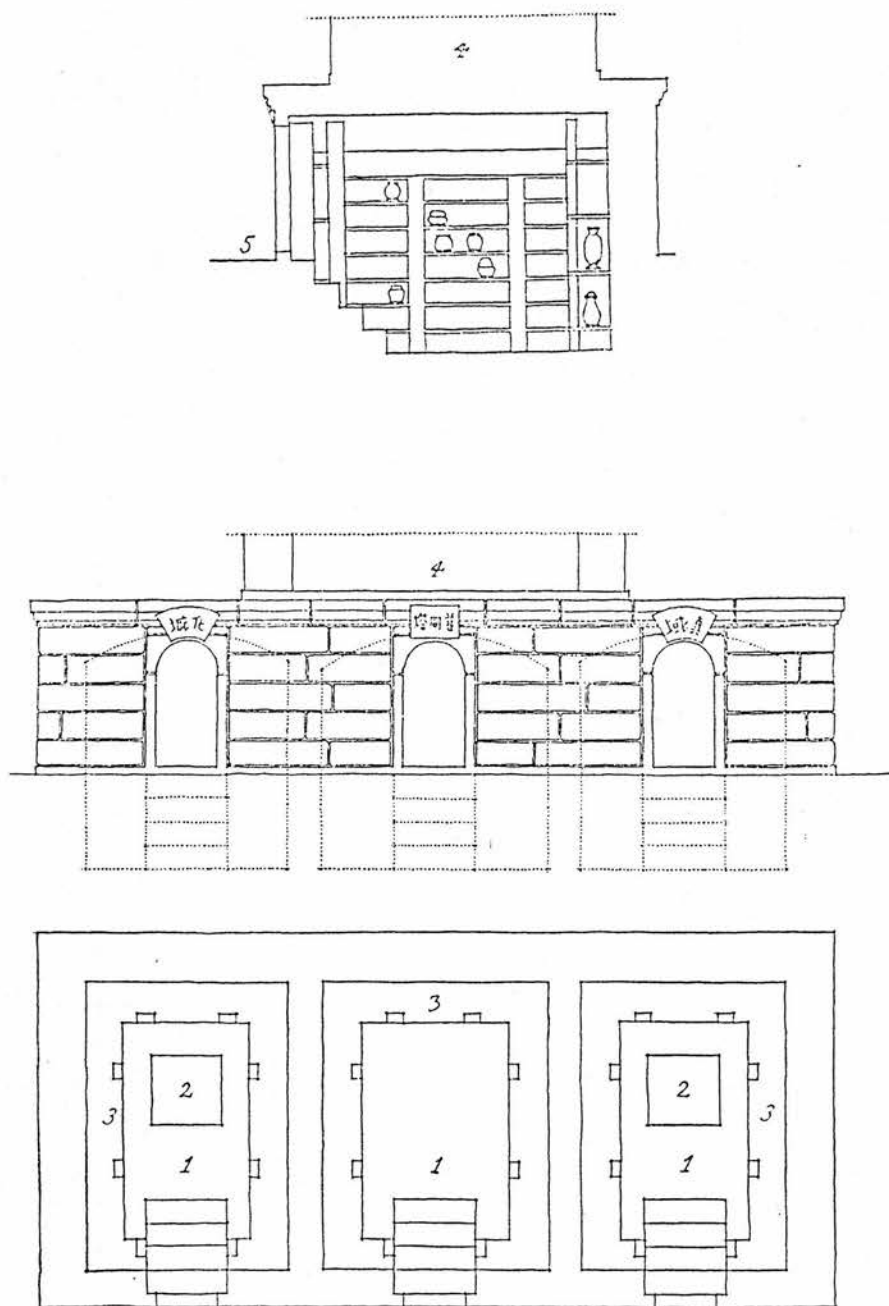


Figure 5.25. *P'u-t'ung-t'a*, "Tower of Universal Unity", Pao-kuang-ssû, Szechwan province (Prip-moller 1937: 179)

Enlightenment, and the passage through fire symbolises spiritual sublimation, i.e. the regeneration of self.

The impediments, as Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1973: 2. 309) point out, are the "Bonds of Selfhood". In ritual, selfhood is represented by sticks. Normally, a total of one hundred and eight sticks will be provided in the ceremony, representing the one hundred and eight sorts of selfhood, such as ignorance, craving, etc. (Snodgrass 1985: 355).¹⁵⁹ The one hundred and eight steps which traditionally lead up to remote mountain temples, and the one hundred and eight lighted lamps which cover the body of the Buddha Dipankara, Jan-têng-fo (燃燈佛) (Reichelt 1934: 164) have the same religious significance: the accomplishment of climbing the steps symbolises the complete elimination of "Selfhood"; and the ignition of the one hundred and eight lighted lamps symbolises the burning of the one hundred and eight sins in the mundane world. The outward and physical burning of sticks in the ritual, the climbing of steps, and the ignition of lamps are regarded as the inward and mental consumption of the obstacles that stand in the innermost mind. As the Buddha says, "I kindle a flame within me" (*Samyutta Nikâya* I. 169; Snodgrass 1985: 355). By means of the outward fire, the bodily form of the Buddha, as mentioned above, transforms inwardly from the *nirmâna-kâya* to the *dharma-kâya*. In this connection, the body of the devotee is also inwardly connected with the flame. That is to say, his inner body is seen microcosmically as the ceremonial arena wherein the fire ceremony is taking place. To be effective, the outward performance of the devotee in the ceremony -- his action of burning, of climbing, of igniting -- has to express this fiery character. His heart and mind are seen as burning with an inward flame which completely annihilates the mental obstacles, i.e. his sense of self and his passions, on his spiritual journey.

¹⁵⁹ What exactly the one hundred and eight sorts of selfhood or sin are is unclear. The number is calculated in general terms referring to all the sins that sentient beings possess.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the inward flame that destroys the "Bonds of Selfhood" is interpreted as *tapas* ("Inner Heat") (Eliade 1960: 106f). Therefore, "the ability [to cultivate the *tapas*] to dry out wet sheets applied to the naked body or the ability to melt snow" (Snodgrass 1985: 355) was often employed to judge the degree of the achievement of the devotee (David-Neel 1965: 216f). In practice, the "Inner Heat" is often generated by the breathing. In Tantrism, the cultivation of the inward flame is interpreted as "the external projection of an inward conflagration" (Snodgrass 1985: 354) and employed in meditation.

In relationship with the meditation techniques of Buddhist Tantra, the three forms of the body of the Buddha -- *nirmâna-kâya*, *sambhoga-kâya* and *dharma-kâya* -- are considered as to be sited on the umbilical, cardiac and laryngeal regions of the body respectively. During meditation, as indicated in Figure 5.26., the concentrating mind (*citta*) -- the focus of the psyche's volitional, affective and thinking activities, which is identified here as the inward fire -- starts from the perineum of the body (*susumnâ*) and moves upwards, through the umbilical (*nirmâna-cakra*), cardiac (*sambhoga-cakra*) and laryngeal (*dharma-cakra*) regions, finally arriving at the crown of the head (*usnîsa-kamala*), and from there it returns to the starting place. In the course of ascension, every region, or the *cakra* ("Wheel"), lying between the two ends of the spinal column -- the mundane perineum and the supra-mundane head -- is regarded as a spiritual stage, connected by the Breath channels (*prâna*) through which the "mind" (*citta*) ascends and descends (Tucci 1961: 113; David Neel 1965: 221; and Govinda 1959: 171ff).

After a cycle of a fiery ascent and descent, the fire will have burnt away all impediments standing in the way of Deliverance, and Liberation is achieved (Dasgupta 1962: 101). The legend of the fiery nature of Sakti, described by the Buddhist *Tantras*, bears witness to this fiery path of meditation:

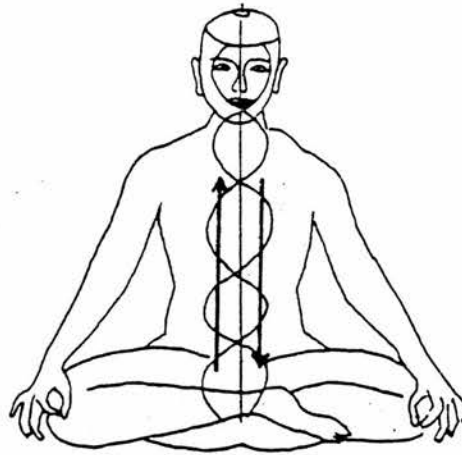
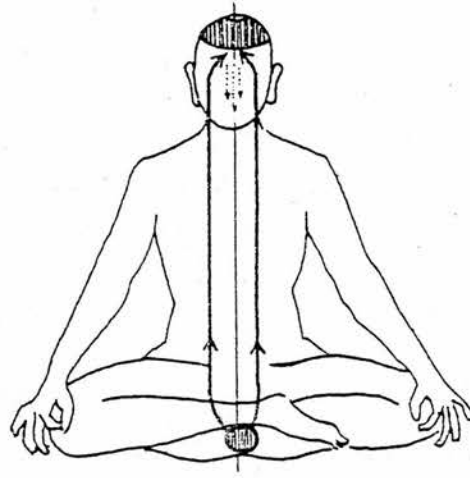


Figure 5.26. The ascending and descending courses of the mind (*citta*) through the Breath channels of the human body (Snodgrass 1985: 305, 313, and 318)

"[In the beginning, the Sakti] lies dormant within the *nirmâna-cakra*, the subtle centre located in the umbilical region. When awakened she reveals her presence by the sensation of a great fire, which burns upwards in a fiery ascent through the *dharma-cakra* and *sambhoga-cakra* to the *usnîsa kamala* at the top of the head. From there, having burnt everything in her path, she returns to her starting place." (Dasgupta 1962: 101 and Snodgrass 1985: 354)

To sum up, the flame, in the Buddhist cremation ceremony, is related to the doctrine of the threefold body of the Buddha *san-shen*, or *trikâya*. On the basis of this doctrine, the cremation of the deceased Buddha is seen as a process of purification, or of spiritual sublimation. That is to say, the fire, in the course of combustion, will "burn away" all the impediments that obstruct the transformation of the body from the lower realm to the higher one; the sacred relics, as a whole, bear witness to the unity of the Buddha and the transmission of his body. As Snodgrass (1985: 356) asserts, "[The presence of the relics] in the [pagoda] testifies that the Buddha has passed through the self-consuming conflagration of Perfect Knowledge."

Microcosmically, the body of the devotee is also regarded as an arena wherein his heart and mind are "burning" with an inward flame which strives to annihilate mental obstacles, i.e. selfhood. The Tantric Buddhists in particular use this image in meditation. Thus, after a cycle of fiery ascent from the realm of *susumnâ* at the perineum of the body through the *nirmâna-cakra*, *sambhoga-cakra* and *dharma-cakra* to the *usnîsa-kamala* and then the descent back to the starting place, the fire has symbolically destroyed all impediments standing in the way of Deliverance.

On the whole, flame in Buddhism is regarded as an *axis mundi* through which the devotee proceeds, either inwardly or outwardly, on his spiritual journey towards the final Enlightenment. Within the temple premises, Ultimate Return by flame is reflected in the cremation of the bodies of deceased monks and in meditation. During

the meditation, Ultimate Return is metaphysically associated with the inward flames of the meditator during the ritual ceremony; as for cremation, the depositing of the relics of deceased monks in the pagoda bears witness to the symbolism.

CHAPTER 6

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FORM OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

With regards to architectural types, the Chinese Buddhist temple, as I have discussed in 3.3., consists of the cave, pagoda and pavilion temple. As their names imply, the individual cave, pagoda and pavilion buildings are either the basic unit or the dominating feature of these temples. Of these three classifications of individual building (the cave, the pagoda and the pavilion), the pavilions were originally palaces and grand residences donated by emperors, nobles and bureaucrats who believed in Buddhism. For this reason, most of their outward features exhibit certain building principles of the established traditional Chinese architecture, such as the wooden construction techniques, known as the "post and lintel" framework, the standardised bracket set, known as *tou-kung* (斗 拱), and the methods of "raise and depress", "raising the truss" and "overhanging eaves" used to achieve the curvature of the roof, which I have discussed in 3.5.

As to the cave and pagoda, both buildings, in terms of religious function, are closely connected with equivalent Indian Buddhist monuments. The former, which was constructed in rocky mountain sides and functioned as a shrine and a serene and dark place for the spiritual cultivation of the devotee, is considered to have originated from the Indian cave temple, known as *chaitya-griha* (Figure 6.1.). The latter, which was regarded as a symbol of commemoration, is believed to have evolved from the Indian *stûpa* (Cf. above Figure 4.2.). As for the Chinese situation, the influence of the established Chinese archetype can often be seen in both the aspect of decoration and

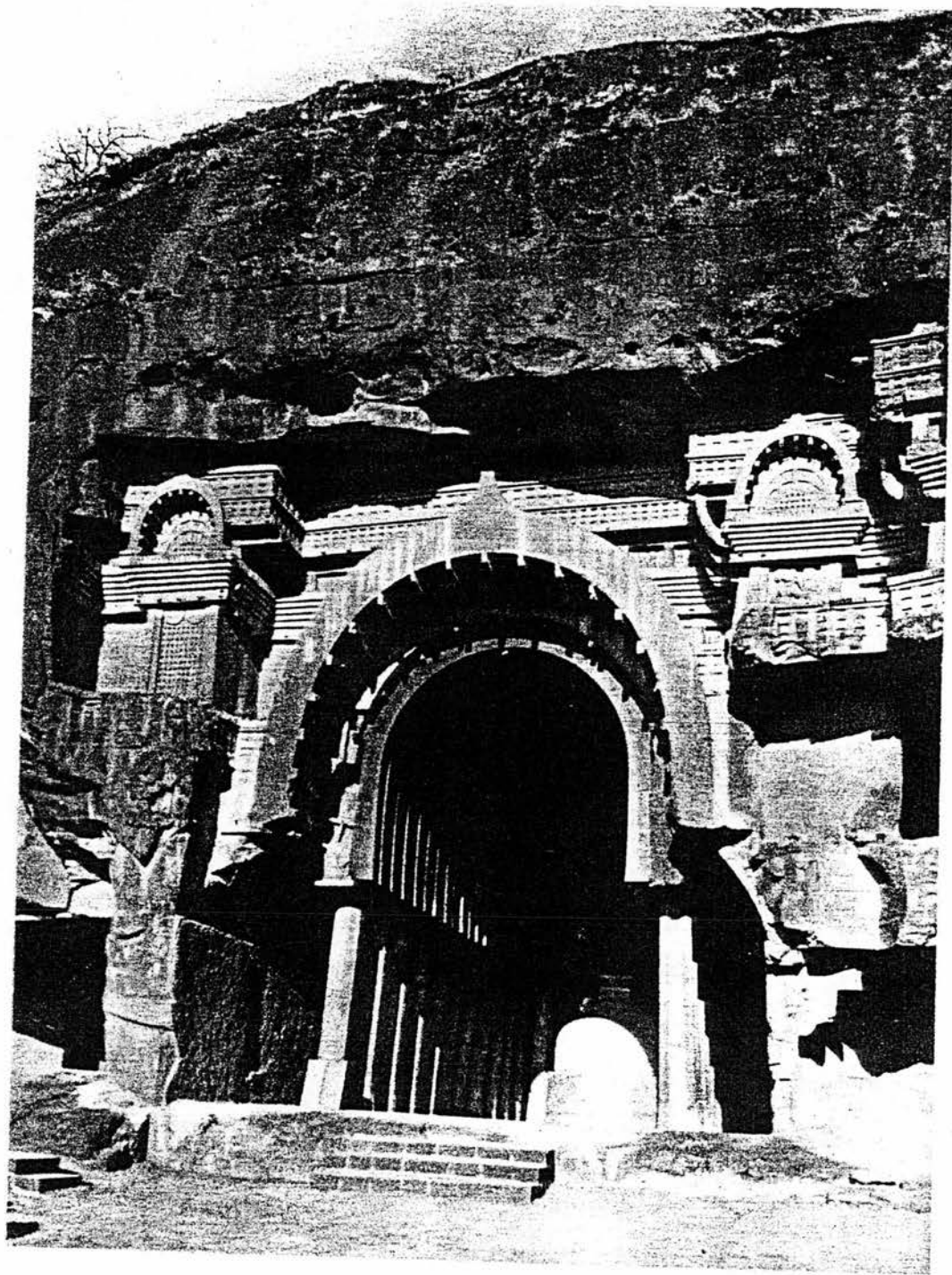


Figure 6.1. *Chaitya-griha*, the Indian cave temple, Bhaja (Mitra 1971, fig. 51)

the building structure of the pagoda which is very similar to that of the Chinese multi-storey building, known as *lou-ke* (樓閣).

As far as the symbolism of the form of individual buildings is concerned, the architectural features that the pavilion exhibits in its outward form are mostly inherited from the established Chinese archetype, which, as I have discussed in 3.5., have more to do with architectural stylistic development than religious import. Therefore, in this chapter, the exploration of the symbolism of the form of individual buildings will be focused on the essential characteristics of the pagoda and cave, including the central post of the pagoda and cave, in the number of storeys of the multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagodas, in the roof spire of the pagoda and the inner space of the cave.

The first of these, the internal central post of the cave and pagoda, represents the *axis mundi*, a vertical channel through which the cosmic forces -- the One to the Many, and the Enlightened to the Centre -- are put into action. Moreover, in relationship with the earth-touching hand gesture of the Buddha and *vajra*, the diamond, this inner post also symbolises the prop between Heaven and Earth, which is believed to support the world.

As to the outward body of the pagoda, the symbolism is revealed in the number of storeys it has, the discs of its roof spire and its gourd and jewel finials. Of these aspects, both the storeys of the pagoda body and the discs of the roof spire are odd in number, and there are between five and thirteen of them. Corresponding to their positions on the vertical shaft of the building, the number of the former symbolises the religious stages in the intermediate space between the terrestrial and celestial world, of which Mt. Meru is the Centre; that of the latter represents the stages above Mt. Meru in the celestial world.

In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the storeys thus symbolise the spiritual journey on which the devotee embarks to attain Enlightenment, that is, to escape from the endless cycle of transmigration; and the discs, the accomplishment of the final and ultimate Enlightenment, that is, becoming a Buddha, which is represented here by the gourd and jewel finial. In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the former signifies the space of all directions which is filled by the radiating Centre, as well as the extent of time, with reference to the method of calculating the passing of time by the cycle of the planets. For the layers of discs which represent the realm of heaven, the spatio-temporal symbolism cannot be revealed in terms of their number, because in Heaven, space is infinite and time is immeasurable.

When it comes to the cave, the symbolism is based on the religious function of the cave -- a serene, quiet and dark place for spiritual cultivation. In Buddhist connotation, the spiritual ascent of the devotee from the Realm of Desire (Kâmadhâtu) to the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu) corresponds metaphysically to entry into the cave at sunset and exit at sunrise. That is to say, the dark cave is the arena in which the devotee can further his spiritual cultivation in order to attain the state of Arhat.

On the whole, in the aspects of both the internal central post and the external building facade of the pagoda and the central post and interior space of the cave, the form of the individual buildings of the Chinese Buddhist temple bear witness to the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, where the essential characteristic of the Centre is revealed, and to the doctrine of Ultimate Return, in which the entire spiritual journey of the devotee is disclosed.

6.2. THE CENTRAL POST

Of the three architectural patterns that have been discussed in 3.3., the central space of the pavilion hall is often allocated as the accommodation for the Buddha images. In such cases, there is no room for a central post in the pavilion. Columns are normally organised either in parallel lines or surrounding the central altar, as shown in Figure 6.2. However, in cave and pagoda temples, a central column is often a significant feature of the building. For instance, in the Yün-kang cave temple, the majority of the constituent caves had a stone column in their centre rather than a Buddha image. Here, the columns are carved in the shape of a square pagoda; because the pagodas are directly carved out of the central column, they obviously are of solid stone. The pagoda column in Cave 6 is a typical example of this kind, as shown in Figure 6.3. Instances of this kind can also be found in other cave temples (Figure 6.4.).

Regarding the pagoda temple, the pagoda was originally constructed with a column, referred to as *hsin-chu* (心 柱, "Heart Pillar"), in the centre. Documentary evidence of this can be found in both *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* and *Hsü kao-sêng chuan*: according to them, after the Yün-ning (永 寧) temple pagoda of nine storeys, built in A.D. 516, was destroyed by fire, the smoke from the burning central post lasted for a whole year. Unfortunately, there is no extant example of a pagoda with a central column on Chinese soil. However, we may gain some idea of what it would have looked like from the Hôryu temple pagoda in Nara Japan which was built in A.D. 607 in the Chinese Sui era (A.D. 581-618), and is shown in Figure 6.5.

The post forming the central column of the Hôryu temple pagoda is set deeply into the ground. As Snodgrass (1985: 321) points out, there are also two other ways to place the central post: it can either be suspended by chains from the external

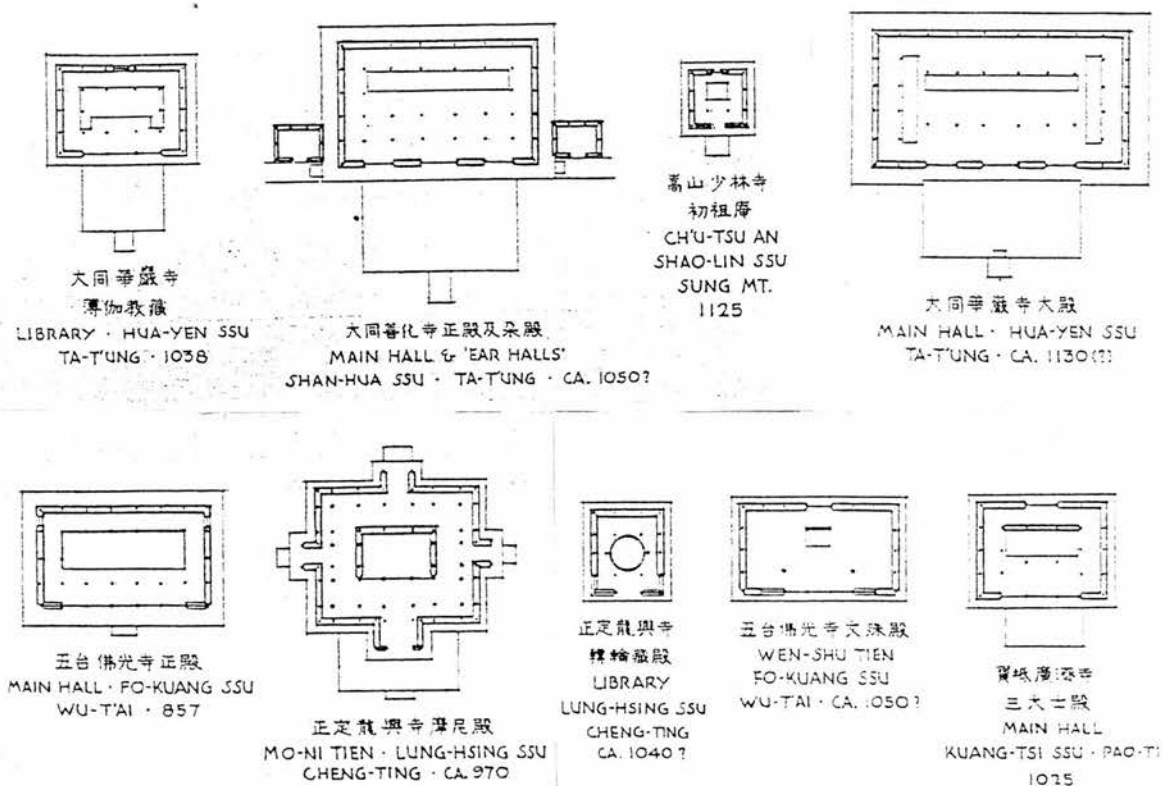


Figure 6.2. Columniation of Buddhist pavilion halls (Liang 1984: 39)

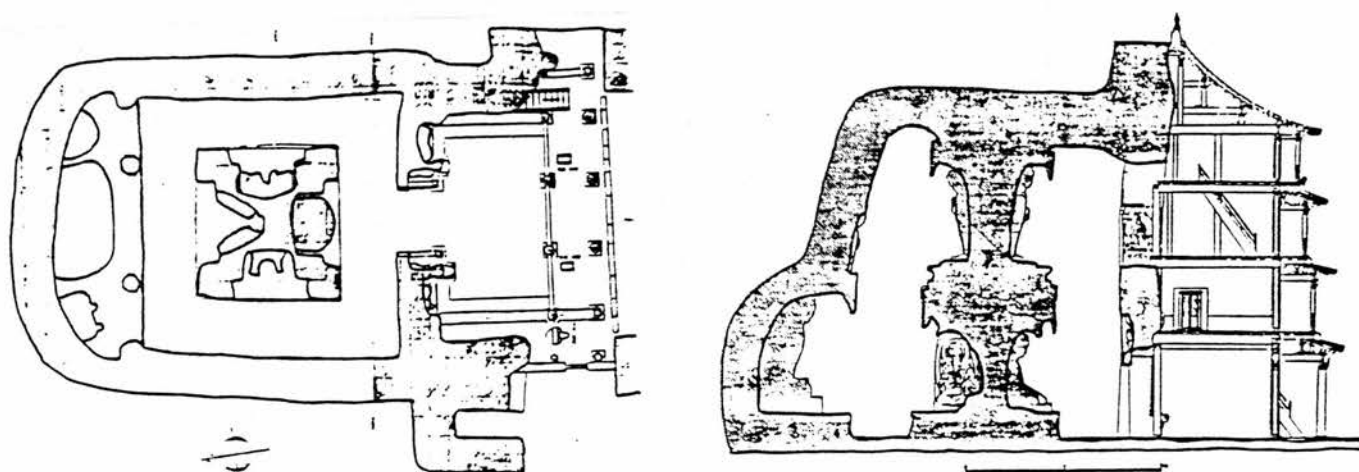
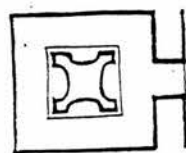
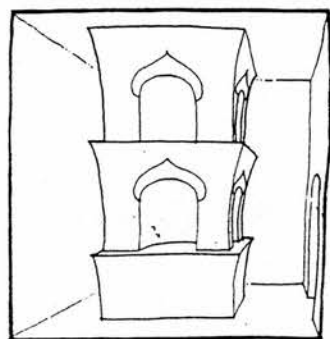
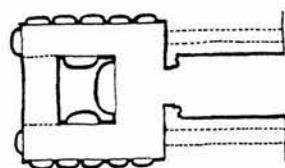
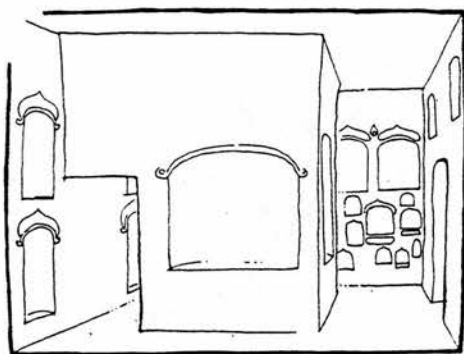


Figure 6.3. Plan and section, no. 6 cave of the Yün-kang cave temple (Ho 1992: 282)



(Thousand Buddha Cave, Wen-shu-shan cave temple)



(No. 1 cave, Hsiang-t'ang-shan cave temple)

Figure 6.4. Comparative plans and sections of cave temples (Hsiao 1989: 38)

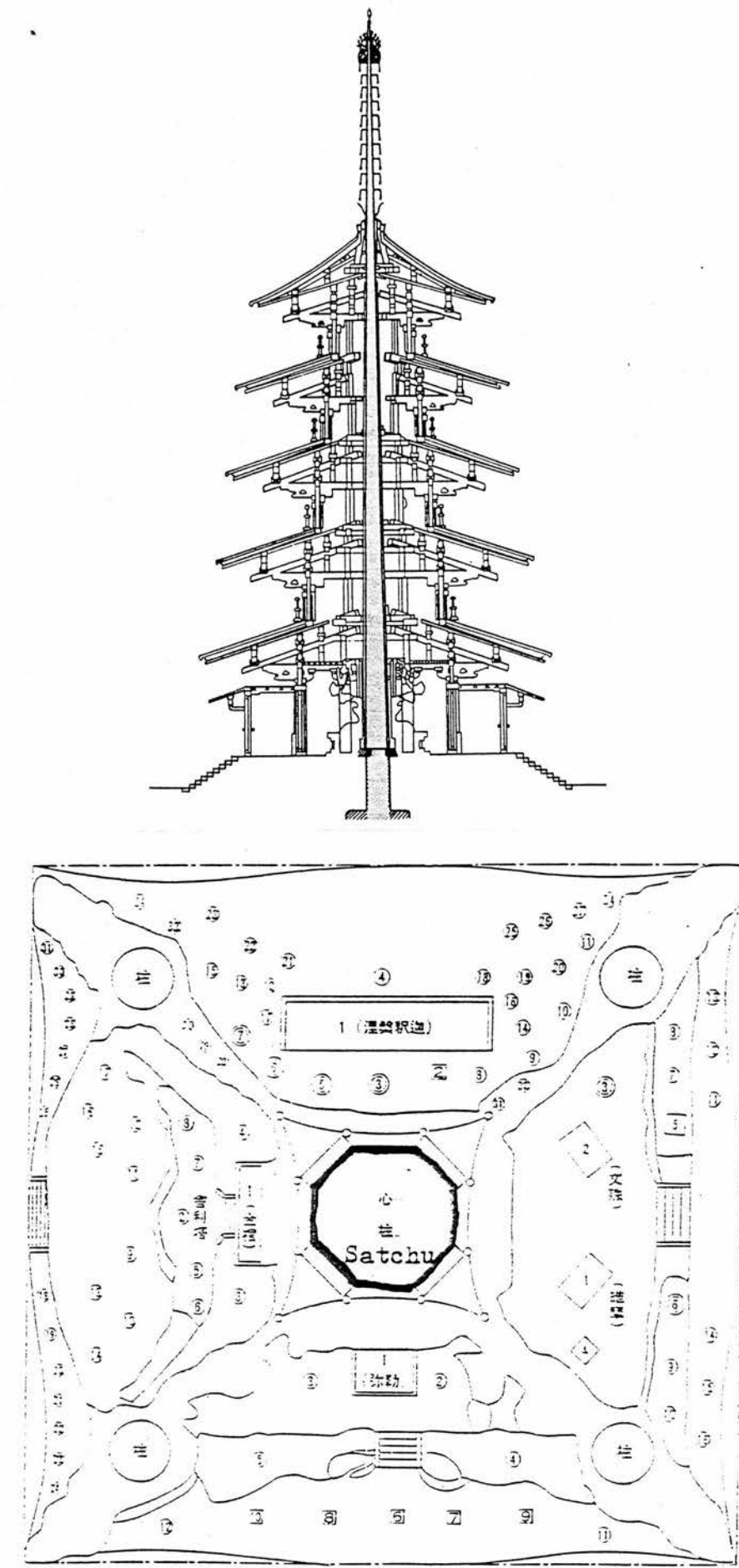


Figure 6.5. Plan and section, Hôryû temple pagoda, Japan
(Hoshida 1980: 179 and Hsieh: 1987: 13)

columns supporting the pagoda walls, or rise from a foundation stone level with the ground, as shown in Figure 6.6. These alternative methods in the Chinese pagoda may, according to Snodgrass (1985: 320), originate from those used for the central post of the Indian dome *stûpa*, as shown in Figure 6.7. As far as the building facade is concerned, the inner central post extends all the way up above the roof, and, in this way, becomes the roof spire. When the post is no longer placed in the centre of the pagoda, the roof spire becomes the only trace left of it: I shall discuss this later, in 6.4. In cosmological terms, the central post represents the sacrificial post (*yûpa*) of the Vedic tradition. The symbolism of the sacrificial post resides in its form: square at the bottom, octagonal in the middle and round at the top, as shown in Figure 6.8. These three sections, from the bottom to the top, symbolise the "Three Worlds" -- Earth, Midspace, and Heaven respectively. The post as a whole is regarded as the support of the Worlds.

Moreover, in Brahmanism, the central post is identified as the Column of the Sun that is "pillaring apart" Heaven and Earth. In Indian belief, before the genesis of the universe Heaven and Earth were indistinguishable the one from the other. The Sun-Pillar rose at the Dawn of the cosmos, and split Heaven and Earth apart. As revealed in *Atharva Veda* (X. 8.2), it "is by [the cosmos's] being pillared apart by this Pillar that Heaven and Earth stand fast" (Snodgrass 1985: 163). In Brahmanist terminology, the word *Skambha* is commonly employed to denote this Cosmic Pillar, the supporter of the universe. As Kramrisch (1946: 118) points out, *Skambha* bears the universe (*Atharva Veda* X. 7.1-3) and is "the Great Being in the midst of the world, ... to whom all the gods are jointed as the branches around the trunk of the tree". As a post held firmly between Heaven and Earth, the Sun Pillar also functions as a pneumatic pillar, a Column of Breath, that inflates and animates the universe (*Aitareya Âranyaka* III. 1.4).

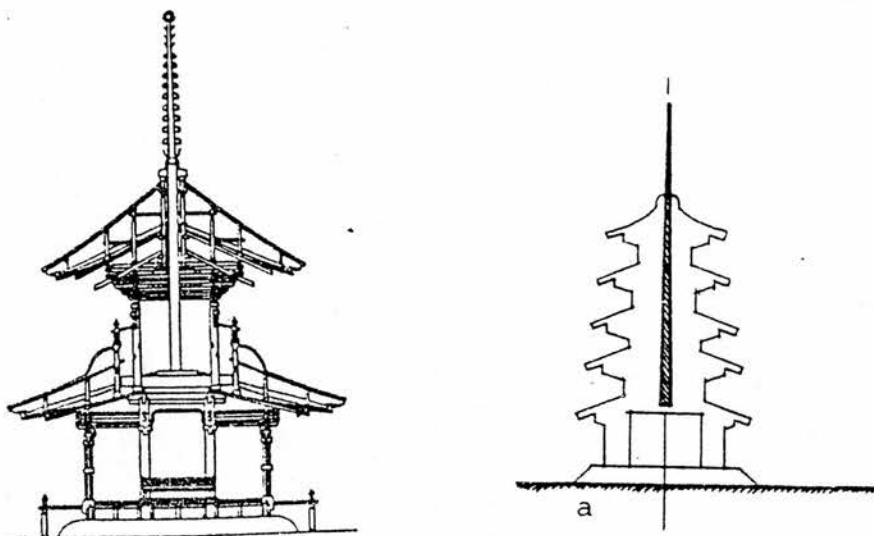


Figure 6.6. Section, Japanese Prabhutaratna pagoda (Snodgrass 1985: 321)

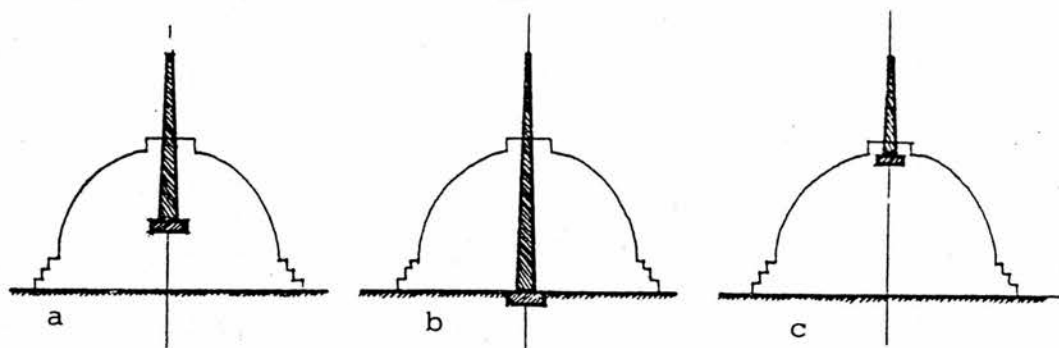


Figure 6.7. Comparative sections of the central post of the Indian dome *stûpa*:
a. penetrating the dome body, b. traversing the dome, c. rising from the
top of the dome (Snodgrass 1985: 320)

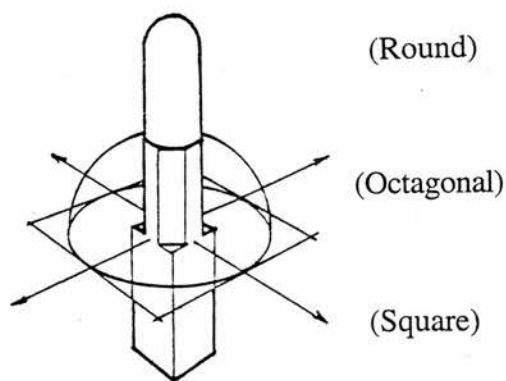


Figure 6.8. Three sections of the Indian sacrificial post (Snodgrass 1985: 165)

In Buddhism, the idea of a central post which supports the world is correlated with the Bodhi Tree. In Buddhist connotation, the Tree is seen as the world axis that supports the universe (Figure 6.9.). As Guénon (1958: 46) points out,

"its branches are the heavens; the lower branches or surface of the ground whence it grows are the plane of earth; the roots, plunging into the subterranean levels, are the hells; and the trunk is the world axis that centres and supports these multiple worlds".

Moreover, the Tree represents also the support of the birth of the Buddha. As reflected in the legend of the Buddha, the Tree supported the Buddha's mother Mâyâ (with her right hand raised to grasp the tree branch), when she gave birth to the Buddha (Viennot 1954: 132). And, as indicated in *Lalita Vistara* (XI), this is the same Tree which bears the weight of the mothers of Buddhas. In other words, all Buddhas were born with the support of the Bodhi Tree. In this sense, the Bodhi Tree is regarded as the world axis that supports the Buddha world; and the precinct of the Bodhi Tree is conceived as the sacred place which the Buddha inhabits.¹⁶⁰

In its relation to the Buddha, the Bodhi Tree plays an important role throughout his spiritual life. As a world axis, the Tree is located at the pivot of the world above which the Sun, representing the entrance to the supra-cosmic realms, is stationed permanently at the summit of the Tree. According to *Nidânakathâ* (I. 74f) and *Lalita Vistara* (XI), the Buddha entered his first *dhyâna* at midday under the shadow of the Tree cast by the Sun. Here, the shadow of the Sun remains in the same area, regardless of the passage of time. Also, in the forty-nine days retreat taken by the Buddha following his attainment of Enlightenment, the promenade indicating his taking possession of the world started from the Bodhi Tree, or the World Axis.

¹⁶⁰ As described in *Divyâvadâna*, the Community, *Sangha*, once asked the Buddha's permission to plant a Bodhi Tree at the entrance of the Jetavana Park in order to protect the premises and provide a place for the performance of *pûja*, and the Buddha approved, and said, "This, so to speak, will be my fixed abode" (Auboyer 1949: 73).

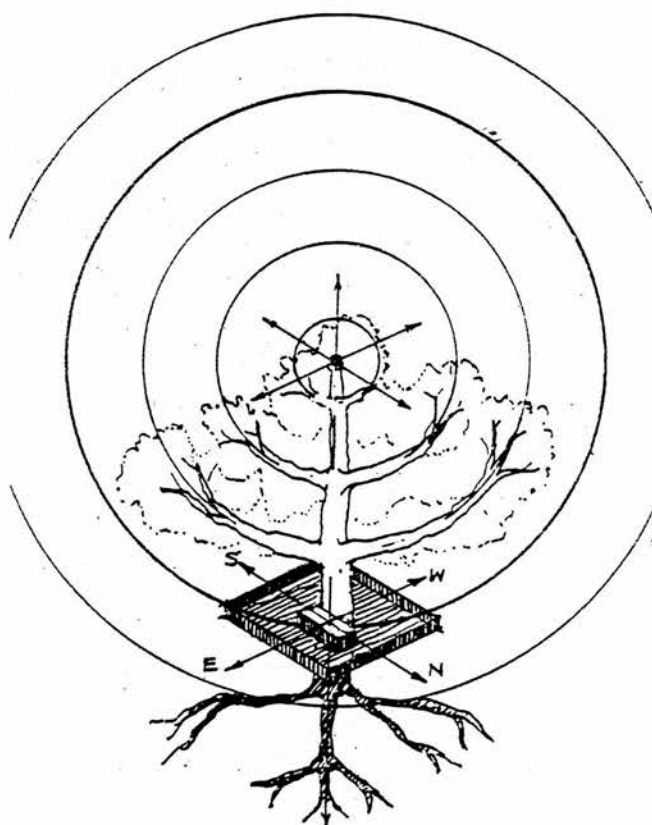


Figure 6.9. Cosmological significance of the Tree (Snodgrass 1985:155)

Furthermore, the winning battle over the evil Mâra took place at the foot of the Bodhi Tree. Before the Buddha took up his station at the foot of the Tree, the World Axis was occupied by Mâra. Then, the Tree represented the "Tree of Existence" which is composed of the three poisonous vermin of Existence: the pig of ignorance, the cock of desire-attachment, and the snake of anger (Snodgrass 1985: 183).¹⁶¹ Seated beneath the Axis, the Buddha identified himself as the personification of "prime mover of the Tree". After the battle, when Mâra was defeated, the poisonous Tree was transformed into the Wisdom Tree, (*jnâna-druma*) "whose roots strike deep into stability ... whose flowers are moral acts... which bears the Dharma as its fruit ... and ... ought not to be felled" (*Theragâta* 761 & 1094; Coomaraswamy 1979: 11f). Since the Bodhi Tree is repeatedly emphasised as the Axis of the World in these legends, it is regarded as a symbol of the Buddha who is seen as the personification of the Cosmic Pillar. As declared in *Kalingabodhi Jâtaka* (IV. 228), in reply to Ânanda's enquiry about the substitute to which reverence can be addressed in the Buddha's absence both during his lifetime and after his *parinirvâna*, the Buddha gives clear instructions that a tree is an appropriate symbol (Snodgrass 1985: 180).

As has been discussed above, the middle section of the post is octagonal in shape. In association with the natural structure of diamond which is also octagonal, this section of the sacrificial post is identified as "Diamond", or *vajra*, the strongest substance in the world, which the God Indra employed to stabilise Earth. The legend of stabilising Earth goes as follows. Heaven and Earth, indistinguishable from one another, co-existed in the Ocean of Universal Possibility before the formation of the universe (*Rg Veda* X. 89.4). Floating upon the Ocean, there is a land mass, which is identified as Earth thereafter, occupied by the Serpent Vrtra who had seized the Waters of Existence and kept them in this land mass, thus obstructing the genesis of the

¹⁶¹ I shall discuss these three poisons of Existence in more detail later, in 7.2.

universe. By hurling the *vajra* (Figure 6.10.), Indra smote the Serpent Vṛtra's head, allowing the Waters to flow free and the process of cosmogenesis to start; he pinned the land mass, or Earth, upon the ocean floor, which gave it a solid foundation or support; and held Heaven and Earth apart with a pillar (*Rg Veda* II. 11.5).

In sum, Earth was unstable before the beginning of cosmogenesis: shaking like a lotus leaf, floating upon the Ocean, it was blown restlessly here and there by all manner of gales (*Satapatha Brâhmaṇa* II. 1.1.8-9). Acting as the central post that supports Heaven and Earth, the *vajra* pacifies the Earth. In this sense, the *vajra*, or the post, which is also called Indra's pin (*indrakîla*), means "stable order" and "lawfulness"; and its antonym, *dassukhîla*, means "disorder" or "collapse of justice". Functionally, it is "used to ensure 'security', 'permanence', 'protection'.... to 'fix' or 'secure', or 'to make safe the threshold'" (*Dîgha-Nikâya* I. 135; Irwin 1980: 23). The octagonal plan of the Chinese pagoda may share some correspondence with that of the *vajra*, or the post, and, by inference, also be regarded as a symbol of the stabilisation of the Earth. However, there is insufficient documentary evidence to justify this assumption.

In practice, the central post, or *vajra*, is employed in a ritual to pacify building sites. The following is an account of the ritual for building Indian houses:

"Before a single stone can be laid... the astrologer shows what spot in the foundation is exactly above the head of snake that supports the world. The mason fashions a little wooden peg from the wood of the khadira tree, and with a coconut drives the peg into the ground at this particular spot in such a way to peg the head of the snake securely down..." (Stevenson 1920: 354).

Here, the pinning of the head of the Serpent to the ground is to fix and cosmicise the chaotic and unformed building site. In Buddhism, the central post, or *vajra*, is employed to lay out a *mandala* site.

"On the first day of the seven day ritual, ... the performer of the ritual kneels upon the ground and strikes the earth with a *vajra* held in the

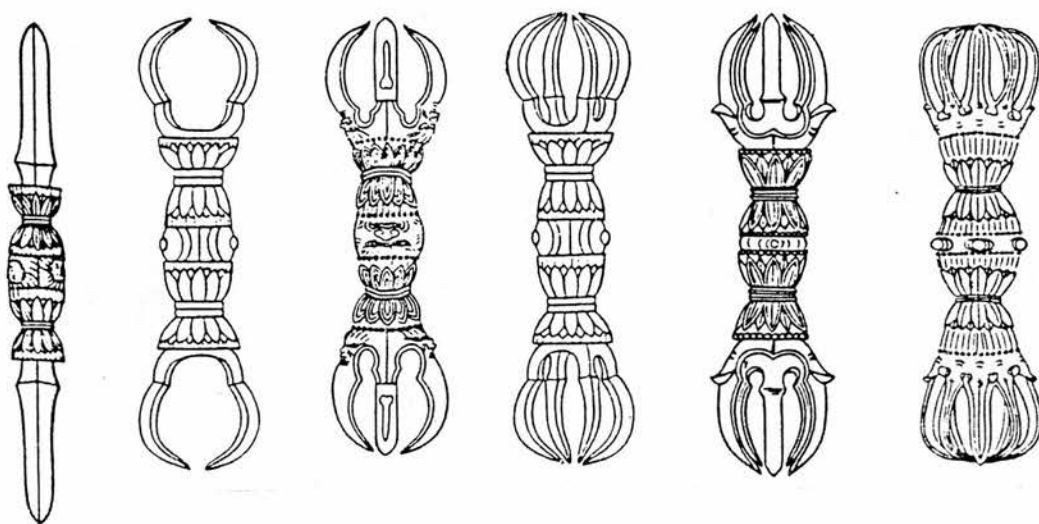


Figure 6.10. Examples of Indian *vajras* (Snodgrass 1985: 175)

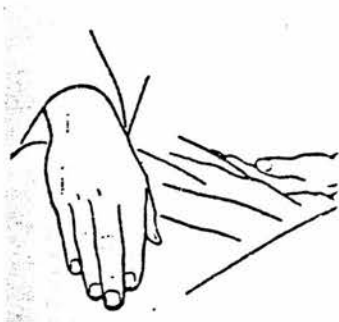


Figure 6.11. Earth-touching gesture of the Buddha (Snodgrass 1985: 186 & 187)

right hand. Then, transferring the *vajra* to the left hand and holding it at the breast, he makes the earth-touching sign, or *bhûmi-sparsa-mudrâ*, with the right hand, reaching down to rest his fingers upon the ground, while reciting the *dhâranî* of the Earth Goddess and meditating upon her form so as to identify with its essence. He offers incense, flowers, lights and other gifts to the Goddess and to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Being now assured of a firm ground on which to base it, he proceeds to lay out the *mandala*." (Snodgrass 1985: 186; Mikkyô Daijiten 974).

Here, the striking of Earth with the *vajra* and the making of the earth-touching sign with the finger tips touching the earth is to ask the Earth Goddess her permission for using the ground, so as to stabilise the site.

Moreover, stabilising the site by the earth-touching sign also echoes the legendary life of the Buddha. In the battle between the Buddha and the Mâra under the Bodhi Tree,

"[the Buddha] touches the earth with his finger tips and calls upon the Earth Goddess to bear witness to the virtues by which he occupies the seat at the centre of the universe. At this the earth trembles in six ways and the Goddess springs forth from the ground and proclaims [the Buddha] the rightful occupant of the Throne, thereby defeating the demonic hordes and their leader" (Snodgrass 1985: 187).

By this earth-touching gesture (Figure 6.11.), the Buddha wins the battle over the Mâra who is the symbol of disruption, instability and disorder. The universe will therefore be unshakeable and firm. To sum up, all the performances mentioned above are designed to stabilise the site and, by extension, Earth. In this sense, the symbolism of the earth-touching sign as well as the *vajra* is cognate with that of the central post. In cosmological terms, the post not only represents the support of the world but was also employed to stabilise Earth.

In Brahmanism, the central post is also regarded as a channel through which people on Earth can communicate with the God Indra in Heaven. As stated in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (III. 7.1.17; Snodgrass 1985: 322),

"He who has set up the sacrificial post has hurled the vajra... Indra, forsooth, is the deity of the sacrifice... and he (the sacrificer) thereby connects it (the sacrificial post) with Indra".

In keeping with the Vedic tradition, the Buddhist regards the central post as the *axis mundi*, a vertical channel through which the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre (the One to the Many) and the doctrine of Ultimate Return (the Many to the One) are fulfilled.

In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the central post symbolises the *axis mundi* from which the world is created. The symbolism is reflected in the Buddhist myth of producing the beverage of immortality, *amrta*, wherein the post symbolises the Mountain Rod. According to this myth, the ambrosia (*amrta*) is extracted from the Milky Ocean by churning with the Mountain Rod (Figure 6.12.).

The extraction schema, as Snodgrass (1985: 177-8) points out, is as follows:

"For the churning rod, they used Meru, the mountain pivot of the world, supported at its lower end by a giant Turtle and steadied at its summit by Visnu. For the churning rope they used the cosmic Serpent Vāsuki, twisting its coils around the Mountain. With the Gods [*devas*] at one end and the Titans [*asura*] at the other, they pulled the Snake back and forth, setting the Mountain spinning on its axis. Churned by this motion the Milky Ocean began to solidify and from its depths appeared thirteen precious objects. The last of these to emerge was the physician of the Gods, Ghanvantari, holding in his hand the moon, containing *amrta*, the drink that confers everlasting life."

As revealed in the myth above, the churning Mountain Rod, or the central post, standing between Visnu (Heaven) and the Turtle (Earth), symbolises the *axis mundi*. The symbolism is testified to in a sculpture showing the central post of a pagoda resting upon a Turtle (Figure 6.13.). With the *devas* and the *asura* pulling at either end of the Serpent, easing the tension of cosmic oppositions by pulling and counterpulling universal complementaries, the cosmic churning here symbolises the genesis of the world.

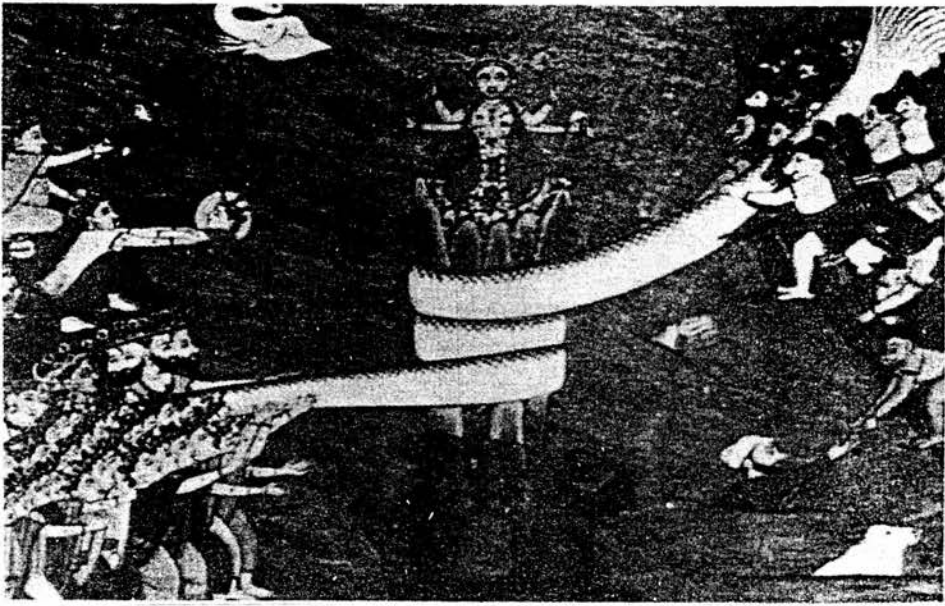


Figure 6.12. Churning with the Mountain Rod (Snodgrass 1985: 180)



Figure 6.13. Central post of a pagoda resting on a Turtle (Snodgrass 1985: 179)

In the context of the meditation techniques of the Buddhist Tantra discussed in 5.5. above, the Mountain Rod corresponds to the spinal column of the human body (Cf. above Figure 5.26.). This symbolism is based on the correspondence of the macrocosm and microcosm, the human body being seen as a miniature of the universe. As revealed in *Ayuttara* (IV. 45-6), "In this fathom-length body, furnished with perception and consciousness, there is contained the world." (Snodgrass 1985: 317) The ascension of the central post as a spiritual journey towards Enlightenment can therefore be conceived of metaphysically as the ascension of the spinal column towards Immortality.

In this microcosmic schema, the Turtle represents the perineum of the body (*susumnâ*); the two halves of the Serpent (*îdâ* and *pingalâ*), the Breath channels (*prâna*), or the ascending and descending routes; and Visnu who is seated at the top of the rod-mountain, the crown of the head (*usnîsa-kamala*). The immortalising procedure will be as follows: the ambrosia (*amrta*) rests originally at the root of the body, or the Turtle, and ascends afterwards through the Mountain Rod, up to the apex of the body, or Visnu, whence it descends along the same route to immortalise the body (Dasgupta 1962: 239). In Buddhist connotation, the ambrosia (*amrta*) corresponds to the Mind of Awakening (*bodhicitta*). The meditational practice is therefore to activate the Mind of Awakening, which lies dormant within the Turtle. As to the spinal column as a whole, it is referred to as Mt. Meru, the central post of the universe.

In this connection, the central post symbolises the pathway to Heaven. In ritual, the symbolism is reflected originally in the Brahmanic rite --*vâjapeya*. During this ceremony, the sacrificer first climbs up the sacrificial post (*yûpa*). When he reached the top, he finds hanging there a wheel filled with wheaten flour: he then pours wheaten flour on his arms outstretched like wings, symbolising his ascension to

Heaven (*Taittirîya Samhitâ* I. 7.9; Auboyer 1949: 79. n. 4). As far as the spiritual journey is concerned, the top of the post represents the final destination. The ascent of the devotee to the top symbolises his attainment of Liberation. The symbolism is repeated with variation of the form of sacrificial post in other texts. For example, in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (V. 2.1.10), a ladder is used as a symbol of the central post.

In Buddhism, the symbolism is testified to by the legendary events of the Buddha's life. Facing North, where the polar star is situated, and where the summit of the universe (*lokagge*) lies (See above 4.3.2.), the Buddha took "seven steps" after his nativity. At the seventh step, he reached the North, ascended to the Gateway of Exit from the cosmos, and claimed his immortality. At this stage, as Eliade (1960: 114) points out, "He has abolished Time and the Creation and finds himself in the a-temporal instant that precedes the cosmogony". During the seven weeks' retreat following the attainment of Enlightenment, the Buddha took eighteen steps along the East-West axis (Snodgrass 1985: 278). By taking these steps from East to West, following the daily course of the sun, the Buddha once again ascended to the summit of the universe, demonstrated his immortality, and established his sovereignty over space in all directions (See above 6.3). Here, the steps of the Buddha are seen metaphysically as the rungs of a ladder. That is to say, pacing out the steps is considered as an upward progress, like climbing the sacrificial post or ladder, towards Liberation. In sum, the central post, in terms of cosmology, is regarded as the support of the different states of existence and as a symbol of the stabilisation of Earth. Moreover, in terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return, the central post represents the *axis mundi*, a vertical channel through which the cosmic forces -- the One to the Many, and the Many to the One -- are put into action.

6.3. THE NUMBER OF STOREYS OF THE PAGODA

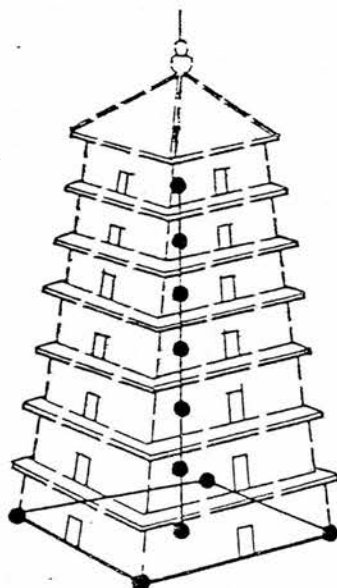
As far as the number of storeys of individual buildings is concerned, the cave temples and pavilion halls commonly have one or at most two storeys. However, pagodas, owing much in their design to the Chinese multi-storey tower, are characteristically multi-storeyed, and this feature has assumed great religious import. The discussion in this section will focus mainly on two types of pagoda, the multi-storeyed and the close-eaved. Within the temple premises, the storeys of these two types of pagoda are usually odd in number (Figure 6.14.). In most cases, the building has five, seven, nine, eleven, or thirteen storeys. For example, the early pagoda carved in the centre of Cave 39 of the Yün-kung temple has five floors, as shown in Figure 6.15. The number of storeys is seldom fewer than five and rarely exceeds thirteen. The oldest pagoda of the Sung-yüeh temple which has fifteen storeys is a rare case (Cf. above Figure 3.14.). As far as the building facade is concerned, some pagodas show this multi-storey appearance by floors, some by eaves.¹⁶² It depends on what classification the pagoda belongs to (For details of the classification of pagoda, see above 3.3.2.).

As far as symbolism is concerned, the central post of the pagoda, as has been explained in the previous section, stands in the space between Heaven and Earth, symbolising the *axis mundi*. In Brahmanism, this space is defined as Midspace. As indicated in *Satapatha Brâhmana* (VI. 1.2.23), "when [Heaven and Earth] were parted asunder [by the Pillar] the space which is between them became that Midspace" (Snodgrass 1985: 233). In Buddhist connotation, Midspace (*antariksa*) represents the intermediate space between the terrestrial and celestial worlds. It covers the space, as Snodgrass (1985: 234) defines, which "extends from the surface of Earth to the first

¹⁶² In the case of the close-eaved pagoda, the number of eaves does not correspond with that of the floors. For example, indicated on the exterior, the Sung-yüeh temple pagoda has thirteen tiers of eaves; but the number is not the same as that of the interior floors.

(Odd number)

二八四六



(Even number)

地數偶

Figure 6.14. Odd number of the storeys of pagoda (Ch'eng 1991: 23)

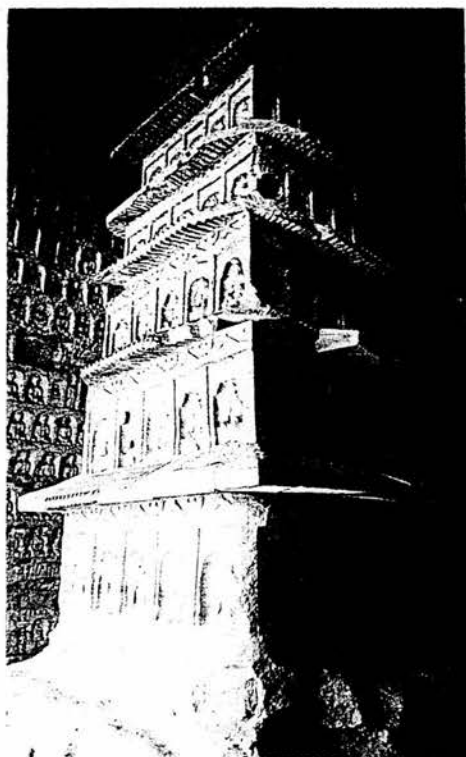


Figure 6.15. Pagoda column, no. 39 cave of the Yün-kung cave temple (Fisher 1993: 96)

[level] of the heavens, the Trâyastrimsa Heaven of Indra at the summit of Meru".¹⁶³ In this view, "Midspace is vertically coextensive with the Cosmic Mountain: its height is exactly that of the Mountain." (Ibid.); and its existence is supported by Mt. Meru which "pillars apart" Heaven and Earth.¹⁶⁴

In this connection, Mt. Meru, which makes the existence of Midspace possible, is cognate with the World Pillar, and the central post of the pagoda (See above 6.1.), and, by reference, the storeyed pagoda, that supports Heaven, Midspace, and Earth (Figure 6.16.).¹⁶⁵ Here, the number of storeys of the pagoda, in terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, represents the levels on the slopes of Mt. Meru, and, in terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, symbolises the spacial direction of Midspace.

As far as the doctrine of Ultimate Return is concerned, the number of storeys of the pagoda signifies the spiritual stages along the path ascending to the summit of Mt. Meru, or the ultimate goal of Enlightenment. The storeys of five-storeyed pagodas represent the five stages along the slopes of Mt. Meru, from the lowest stage upwards, namely, the realm of Serpents (*nâga*), that of Fairwings (*suparna*), that of Demons (*dânava*), that of Spectres (*yaksa*), and that of the four Regents of the four Directions

¹⁶³ According to Table 2.3., the first level of Heaven should be that of the four Regents of the four Directions. Since these two heavens are both located on the summit of Mt. Meru, they are alternatively seen as coexisting at the same level: at the summit of Mt. Meru, the four Regents of the four Direction are situated in the four directions around the Trâyastrimsa Heaven of Indra where Indra and his 32 attendant gods are stationed at the centre. Moreover, in connection with the symbolism of levels on the slope of Mt. Meru which I shall discuss below, it represents the highest level of the slope.

¹⁶⁴ As has been stated in the previous section, at the beginning of the genesis of the universe Heaven and Earth were mixed together in the Ocean of Possibility.

¹⁶⁵ As Snodgrass (1985: 233) points out, " ... the storeyed pile of [pagoda] represents Mt. Meru, the Cosmic Mountain, which is identified with the World Pillar, *stambha*, 'in whom Earth, Midplace and Sky are set' (*Rg Veda* X. 7.12), and 'of whom Earth is the basement and Midspace the bellie ... and the Sky the head' (*Rg Veda* X. 7.32)."

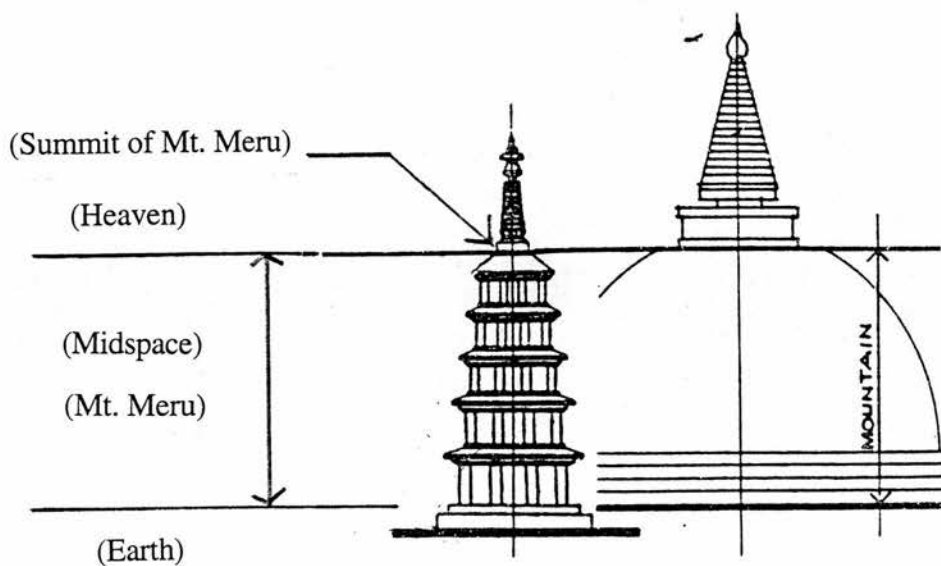


Figure 6.16. The Buddhist cosmology -- Heaven, Midspace, and Earth (Snodgrass 1985: 234 & 265)

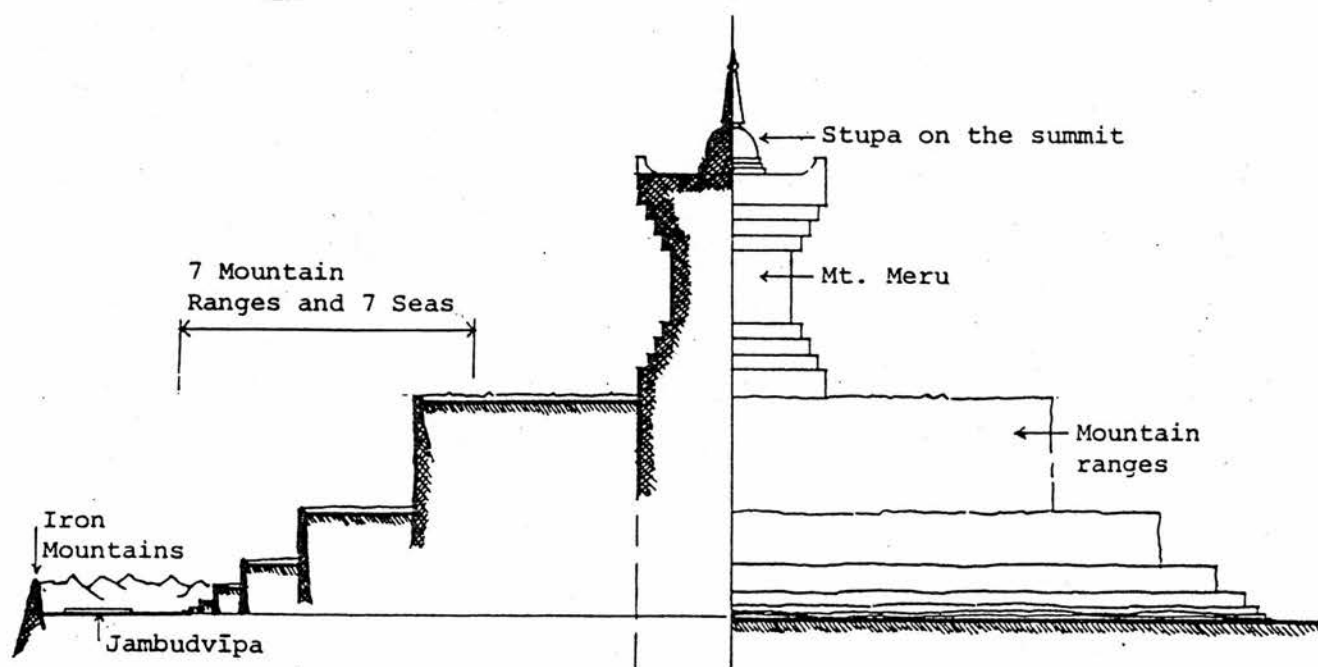


Figure 6.17. Section and elevation, the Buddhist cosmos (Snodgrass 1985: 237)

which lies on the summit of the Mountain (*L' Abhidharmakosa de Vasubandhu* III; La Vallée Poussin 1971).¹⁶⁶

Seven- and nine-storeyed pagodas signify the layers of the concentric cosmic mountain ranges which are all separated from each other by seas and of which Mt. Meru is the Centre. The number "seven" represents the seven concentric circles of mountain ranges (Mus 1935: 356). According to Buddhist cosmology (see 2.4.2.), from the Iron Mountain inwards, each mountain rim is twice as high as the preceding one, as is the intermediate sea in width, as shown in Figure 6.17. The whole mountain system, as Kirfel (1920: 27) describes: "viewed in profile, produces the effect of an enormous pyramid with seven levels ...". As to the nine-storeyed pagoda, the number "nine" symbolises the nine cosmic mountains including the central Mt. Meru, the seven concentric mountain ranges and the Iron Mountain which is the peripheral mountain of the whole series of mountain ranges (Cf. above 2.4.2.).

Eleven- and thirteen-storeyed pagodas signify the layers of the concentric cosmic mountain ranges (seven and nine respectively) and the four levels along the slope of the Mt. Meru. In this cosmological schema, the highest level on the slope of Mt. Meru -- that of the four Regents of the Quarters -- is seen as being located on the summit of Mt. Meru, instead of on the slope, and so is not included in the count.

In each case, the storeys of the pagoda symbolise the stages along the spiritual journey which the devotee must pass as he ascends from the Iron Mountain upwards: with the summit of Mt. Meru always before him, he is constantly kept in mind of his goal of Enlightenment.

¹⁶⁶ Here, that of the four Regents of the four Directions is seen as the fifth level on the slopes of Mt. Meru.

With regards to the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the multi-storeyed pagoda signifies the radiation of space in Midspace from the central Mt. Meru in all the cardinal directions, that is, the cosmogenesis of Midspace. As far as the symbolism of the storeys of buildings is concerned, the number of the storeys corresponds to the number of the spatial directions. Hence, the five-storeyed pagoda symbolises the space of the Centre and the four cardinal directions: East, South, West, and North. Seven-storeyed pagodas represent the space of the Centre, the four cardinal directions, the Zenith, and the Nadir; and nine-storeyed pagodas symbolise the space of the Centre, the four cardinal directions, and four ordinals.

Moreover, in relation to the ritual of *pradaksina* performed in the ambulatory ceremony of the *stûpa*, the storeys of a building symbolise not only the number of spatial directions in general, but also each storey represents a specific spatial direction. According to this ritual, the path of circumambulation leading to the top of the *stûpa*, or the summit of Mt. Meru, is a spirial ascent, with a special sequence. In relationship with the significance of the cosmic directions, the ascending route starts from the East, following the cycle of the sun, proceeds in a clockwise direction and mounts through the South, the West, and the North, and finally arrives at the Centre, the summit of Mt. Meru. In the case of the pagoda, this spiral ascending route is materialised in the internal staircase of the building, which runs around the central axis upwards. In this connection, for the five-storeyed pagoda, each storey, which is seen here as one turn of a helix, represents, starting from the ground floor upwards, the East, the South, the West, the North, and the Centre respectively. As to the seven- and nine-storeyed pagoda, the numbers refer to two legends of the life of the Buddha: the "seven" steps taken by him at his nativity and his "nine" double paces in the cosmic promenade *cankrama* following his attainment of Enlightenment. In those legends, the Buddha follows the cycle of the sun in an ascending and directional sequence, traversing

horizontally all directions and, at the same time, ascending vertically to the summit of the world.

Apart from the spatial significance that the multi-storeyed pagoda expresses in terms of the spatial directions around the cycle of the sun, the number of storeys also has temporal significance, insofar as when time is measured out by the orbits of the planets. The seven-storeyed pagoda represents the seven planets in the solar system -- Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter, and Venus. In the case of the nine-storeyed pagoda, the ascending and descending nodes of the moon's orbit -- Râhu and Ketu -- are also included to make a total of nine planets. Each planet has its own cycle, circling on a yearly basis. Thus, the totality of time, measured out by the cycle of the planets, is divided into years. The movements of the planets as a whole, as Snodgrass (1985: 242) points out, "encapsulate the totality of time".

For the eleven-storeyed pagoda, the number "eleven", as mentioned before, represents the four levels on the slope of the Mt. Meru: the realms of the Serpents, the Fairwings, the Demons and the Spectres, counted together with the seven concentric mountains. The seven concentric mountains are cognate with the cycles of the seven planets. In the case of thirteen-storeyed pagodas, the seven-fold mountain ranges are increased to nine by the addition of the central and peripheral mountains, these latter are cognate with the cycles of Râhu and Ketu. Thus both the eleven- and thirteen-storeyed pagoda have spatial and temporal significance. That is to say, the symbolism of the storeys of the pagoda which is indicated in a spatial and vertically superimpositional manner is repeated in a temporal and successive manner. In this way, the cycles of the planets -- the symbol of divisions of time -- "are merged into the spatial configuration of the mountain levels. Space and time, the coordinates of the cosmos, are once more fused within the building form" (Snodgrass 1985: 243).

Apart from the cosmological spatio-temporal symbolism, the number of storeys of a pagoda also profoundly represents the universal principles and doctrines of Buddhism, which can be used to assist the devotee in the course of his spiritual journey (Snodgrass 1985: 243). As revealed by the hundreds of items listed in the Buddhist dictionaries under the heading "three, the symbolism of this number is abundant. There are three Jewels, three vehicles, three Wisdoms, and so on. As to which symbolism the three-storeyed pagoda evokes, for Buddhists in general, it would tend to be primarily the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*triratna*) -- the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. However, for the school-related Buddhists, it may evoke additional ternary formulae, such as the three Wisdoms in the Tantric school.

For the number "five", the Buddhist dictionaries also list hundreds of items: there are five Buddhas, five Wisdoms of the Buddha (Figure 6.18.), five kinds of *dharma-kâya*, five *bodhisattva* practices, and so on. Moreover, the Chinese classified all the "ten thousand things" that make up the totality of manifestation (elements, colours, flavours, musical tones, viscera, metals, planets, flora, fauna, the senses) into quinary. Every thing in the universe was allocated to one of the *wu-hsing* (五, 五, "Five Directions"). In other words, the five-storeyed pagoda incorporates the cosmos not only in an abstract manner but also in the specific and concrete sense that all of the ten thousand things is correlated with its levels.

Apart from the universal principles and doctrines mentioned above, there are myriads of principles and doctrines for other numbers as well. For example, the text of the Chinese version of the *Diamond sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramita sūtra*) is arranged to form a seven-storeyed pagoda, as shown in Figure 6.19., in order to preach the Doctrine. Of these manifold principles and doctrines, each individual, in the course of interpretation, may choose one or all of them for his own needs, that is to



Figure 6.18. A five-storeyed pagoda formed by 260 Chinese characters of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, symbolising the five Wisdoms of the Buddha (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 85)

(金剛經, the *Diamond sūtra*)

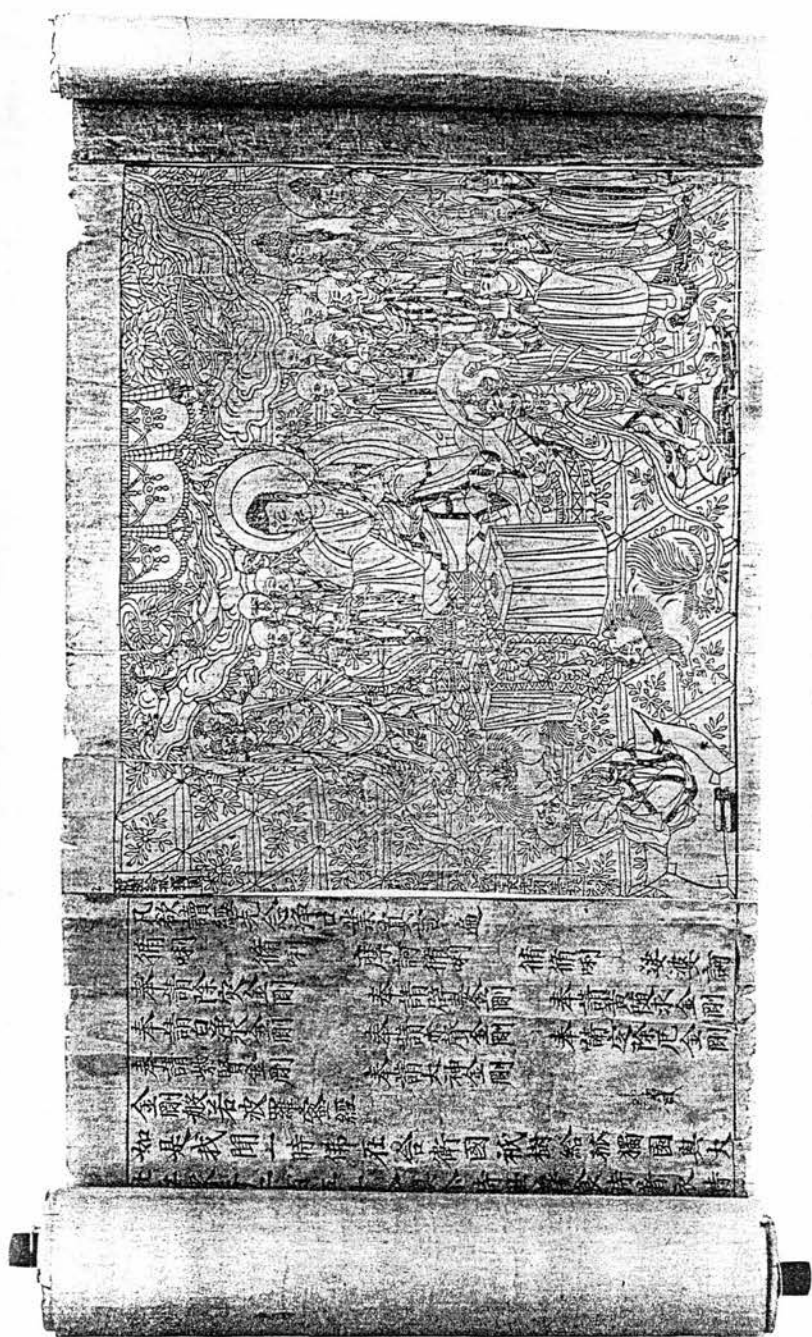


Figure 6.19. A seven-storeyed pagoda formed by Chinese characters of the *Diamond sūtra* (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 85 and Wei 1981: IV, 53)

say, whichever he feels will strengthen his faith in pursuing the spiritual journey towards the final Enlightenment.

To sum up, amongst the three types of individual building (the pavilion hall, the cave and the pagoda) that are the dominant architectural patterns of the Chinese Buddhist temple (See above 3.3.), there are multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagodas, which evolved primarily from the Chinese multi-storey tower. In China, the storeys of the pagoda are always odd in number, and range from five to thirteen. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, the central post of the pagoda is regarded as standing between Heaven and Earth, and symbolising the *axis mundi*. By reference, the main body of the pagoda is considered as rising between the terrestrial and celestial worlds, occupying the intermediate space of which Mt. Meru is the Centre.

In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the number of storeys of a pagoda represent the levels on the slopes of Mt. Meru and the consecutive mountain ranges surrounding it. These in turn signify the religious stages along the spiritual path to Enlightenment (the summit of Mt. Meru). Five-storeyed pagodas represent the five stages along the slopes of Mt. Meru; seven- and nine-storeyed pagodas signify the layers of the concentric cosmic mountain ranges; eleven- and thirteen-storeyed pagodas symbolise the tiers of the concentric cosmic mountain ranges and the levels along the slope of Mt. Meru.

In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the multi-storeyed pagoda signifies space of all directions in the intermediate region and, by referring to the way in which time is measured out by the cycles of the planets, all eternity. Moreover, in association with Buddhist rituals and the legendary events of the Buddha's life, storeys of a building not only symbolise the number of spatial directions in general, but each one represents a specific spatial direction. For the five-storeyed pagoda,

based on the ascending route employed in the ambulatory ceremony of the *stûpa*, from the ground floor upwards its storeys represent East, South, West, North, and the Centre, the summit of Mt. Meru. As to the seven- and nine-storeyed pagoda, the numbers allude, respectively, to the ascending and directional sequence of the "seven" steps taken by the Buddha at his nativity and his "nine" double paces in the cosmic promenade *cankrama* (See above 4.3.1.). Furthermore, the number of storeys of the pagoda is also employed to represent the frequent occurrence of particular numbers in the universal principles and doctrines. In this way, the storeys of the pagoda not only possess complex and thorough-going cosmological spatio-temporal significance, they also offer the devotee solid and constant support in the course of his spiritual journey.

6.4. THE ROOF SPIRE

The central post of the pagoda, as has been discussed above, emerges from the uppermost roof to form the spire. As far as the form is concerned, the prototype of the spire of the pagoda is the spire of the Indian *stûpa*. Situated centrally on the domed roof of the *stûpa*, this is enclosed by a fence (*harmikâ*), and is literally a post with a few superimposed discs, as shown in Figure 6.20. In course of time, the form developed in China into a variety of different types, as shown in Figure 6.21., but, no matter how complicated these appear to be, they all originated from the same prototype. The general scheme of the spire consists of three parts (Cf. above Figure 6.21.): the lower part is formed by the lotus base; the middle part, a mast decorated with the superimposed discs; and the upper part, the gourd or jewel finial. In the following paragraphs, the discussion will be concentrated on the symbolism of the superimposed discs and the gourd or jewel finial. As to the lotus base, I shall discuss it in the next chapter.

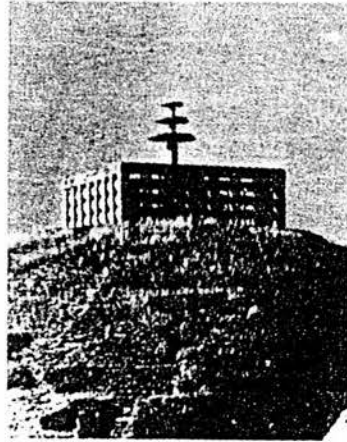


Figure 6.20. Roof spire of Indian *stûpa*, Sanchi (Snodgrass 1985: 246)

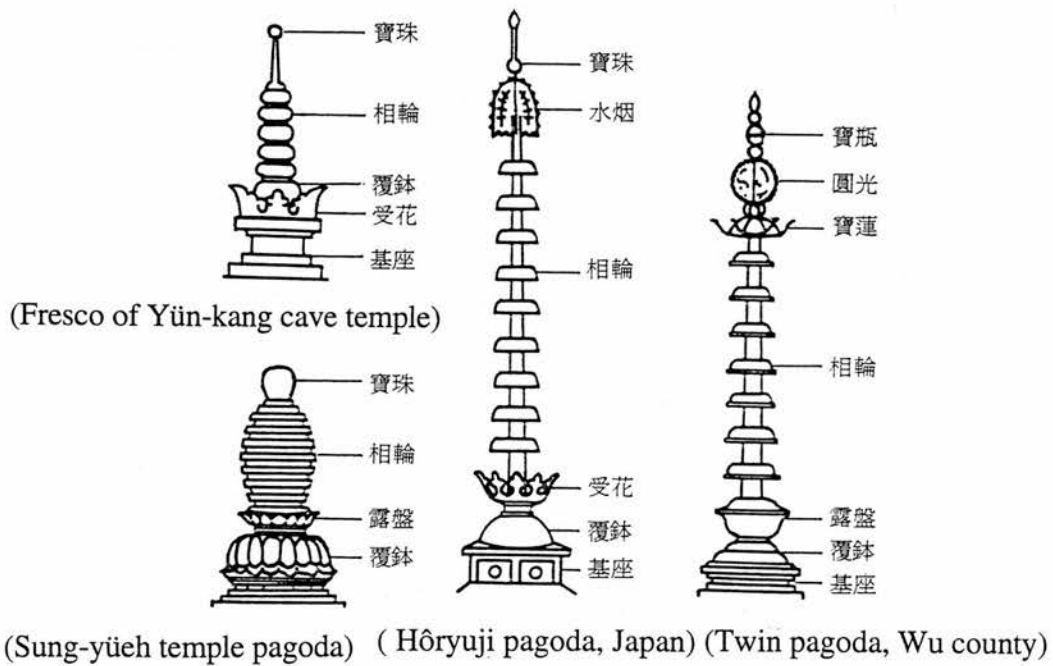


Figure 6.21. Comparative forms of roof spires of pagodas (Hsieh 1987: 31)

6.4.1. The discs

The middle part of the spire, as indicated above, is formed by a mast which is divided into several portions by a series of horizontal discs. Here, the layers of disc are odd in number; and the number rarely goes below five or exceeds thirteen -- like that of the storeys of the pagoda (Snodgrass 1985: 328f). Fo-kung temple pagoda, for example, has five layers of discs on its spire (Cf. above Figure 6.21.); the Miao-yin temple pagoda has thirteen (Cf. above Figure 3.19.). These multiple layers of discs penetrated by a central post symbolise the levels of Heaven above Mt. Meru and the stages on the spiritual path towards the Perfected Awakening -- the Buddhahood. The spire as a whole is regarded as the multiple canopies of the Cosmic Parasol, the Tree of Enlightenment rising from the summit of Mt. Meru. I shall discuss this in more detail in the following paragraphs.

As has been explored in 6.2., the central post of the pagoda is said to stand between Heaven and Earth, symbolising the *axis mundi*. Logically, therefore, the spire, that highest portion of the post which extends beyond the roof of the pagoda, symbolises the realm of Heaven above Mt. Meru. The discs of the roof spire represent, in turn, the series of celestial realms piled one upon the other (Cf. above 2.4.2.), which constitute that Heaven (Cf. above Figure 6.16.). In these cognate cosmological strata, the lowermost layer of disc represents the Yâma Heaven, immediately above Mt. Meru (Snodgrass 1985: 226 & 328), and the uppermost layer, the Akanistha Heaven, the summit of Brahmaloka (Mus 1935: 523 & 716). The disc layers between these two extremities correspond to the hierarchy of celestial realms of Brahmaloka and Devaloka. For instance, the five-disc roof spire represents the heavenly realm of Devaloka and four Meditation realms of Brahmaloka.

With regards to the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the layers of discs also signify the stages of the spiritual journey above Mt. Meru -- from the Arhatship through the Bodhisattvaship to the final Buddhahood (Snodgrass 1985: 333). "Five"-superimposed discs signifies the five stages on the way to the attainment of the state of arhathood. According to *Sarvâstavâdin Vinâya* (Taishô XXIV. 1451. 291), the first stage denotes the embarkation of the devotee on the "Path of Vision" (*Satyadarsanamârga*). Having arrived at this stage, the devotee has attained perfect knowledge to understand the first pure view of the truths (Cf. 5.2.). The second stage symbolises the devotee's attainment of the state of the "Stream-Enterer" (*srotâpanna*). By this stage, the devotee has abandoned false views and entered the stream of sanctification. At the third stage, the devotee has attained the state of the "Once-Returners" (*sakrdâgâmin*), meaning that he will attain Enlightenment in just one more rebirth into the Realm of Desire (Kâmadhâtu). By the fourth stage, the devotee has attained the state of the "Non-Returners" (*anâgâmin*), and will never again return to the Realm of Desire -- he now dwells in the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu). If he reaches the fifth stage, the devotee has attained the state of arhathood.

The discs of the roof spire also represent the Stations of Bodhisattva which must be climbed through if the state of Buddhahood is to be reached (Snodgrass 1985: 150 & 334). The Chinese versions of the Mahâyâna text -- *Karandavyûha* -- list seven Stations of Bodhisattva (Dayal 1978: VI.). However, Soothill and Hodous (1934: 47) claim that there are nine stages, the tenth stage being the state of Buddhahood. Benisti (1960: 101) differs again, saying that there are thirteen Stations of Bodhisattva.¹⁶⁷ The fact that there are instances of seven, nine, thirteen discs has been used to support these varying interpretations.

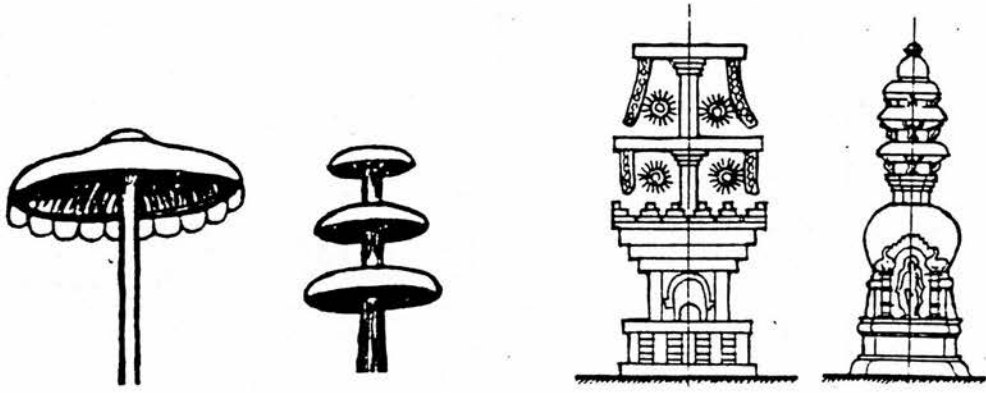
¹⁶⁷ In *Kriyâsamgraha*, the 13 discs of the roof spire referred to 13 powers of the Buddha (Snodgrass 1985: 367).

There are still other interpretations: according to both Mahâyâna and Vajrayâna doctrines, there are fifty two spiritual stages of the Bodhisattva (*bodhisattva-bhûmi*) (*Bukkyô Daijiten* 1214): the first forty stages are called the "Prior Stage"; the next ten stages are called the "Ten Stations" (*dasa-bhûmi*) (Ibid.: 2297); and the last two stages are called the stage of Similar Enlightenment and the stage of Wondrous Enlightenment, which are two levels of the supreme and perfect Awakening, (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) (Ishizuka and Coates 1949: 180). However, alternative numbers have been posited for the Ten Stations. In fact, in Snodgrass's view (1985: 333), to attempt to marry the number of Bodhisattva Stations with the number of the discs of the roof spire is to risk entering "the domain of arbitrary assimilations". He suggests that the two entities must be considered to correspond "in a manner that is conventional, rather than numerical."

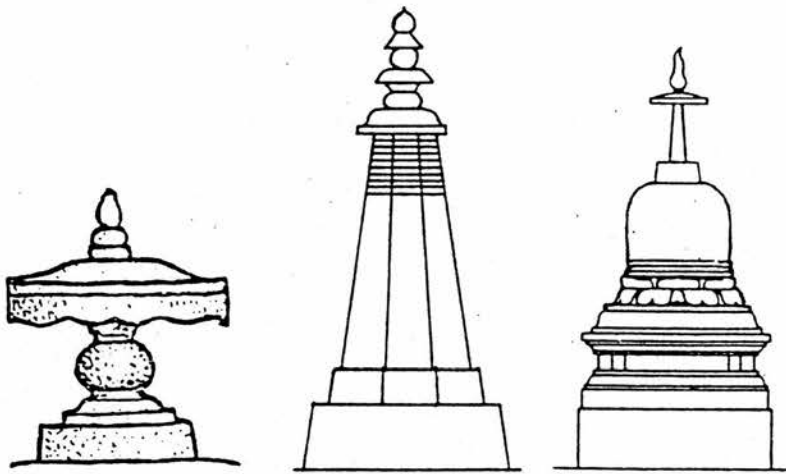
As I have mentioned, the discs of the roof spire also symbolise the multiple canopies of the Cosmic Parasol. In Asia, the parasol is regarded as the emblem of kingship (Bosch 1960: 75): As an embellishment on a roof, the parasol indicates the royal status of the building it shelters (Snodgrass 1985: 96). There is evidence of this in *Mahāvamsa* (XXXI. 90 & 111) in which the Sri Lankan king Dutthagâmani ritually grants his kingship to the great *stûpa* built in his country by placing a parasol upon its summit. Figure 6.22. shows five examples of umbrella-like roof spires on *stûpas* and pagodas.

In Buddhism, the parasol was employed to indicate the regal character of the Buddha. Buddhist buildings adorned with a parasol become symbols of the fact that the Buddha is honoured as Universal Monarch, or Cakravartin. Moreover, because of the structural resemblance¹⁶⁸ between the ribbed parasol and the Dharma Wheel at the

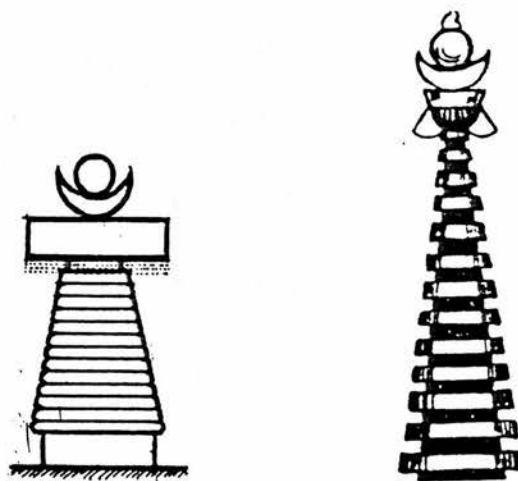
¹⁶⁸ The ribs of a parasol joining at the central post resemble the spokes of a wheel.



(India)



(Java)



(Tibet and China)

Figure 6.22. Examples of umbrella-like roof spires
(Govinda 1976: 80 and Snodgrass 1985: 326)

hub of which the Buddha preached, the pagoda with the parasol on its summit is also acknowledged as the insignia of the Wheel-Turning King, or the Buddha, whose Dharma governs the cosmos. As Snodgrass (1985: 326) points out, "It is the sign of the Buddha's spiritual authority and temporal power".

According to both *Saddharma-pundarîka sūtra* and *Lalita Vistara*, the act of placing a parasol on top of a pagoda is a meritorious act (Combaz 1932: 199). In the Buddhist view, it is in fact so efficacious that it will lead the devotee to instant immortality. According to the *Mahākarmavibhanga* (LXIV. 144), he who donates a parasol will be born as a Universal Monarch, or Cakravartin-king (Ibid.). The *Mahāvastu* (I. 13. 267) takes the Buddha as an example and reveals how "in a previous birth the Buddha erected a parasol above a *stûpa* and as a result of that act escaped rebirth in the evil realm during twenty four cosmic expansions and reabsorptions, was then born as a Cakravartin-king, then among the gods as the chief of the Maruts, and finally as the Fully Awakened One." (Snodgrass 1985: 325)

Finally, the spire together with the central post, represents the Cosmic Tree which extends over the three realms (Cf. above 6.9.). Its branches, which are also seen as the multiple canopies of the Cosmic Parasol, signify the realm of Heaven where all gods dwell;¹⁶⁹ its trunk symbolises the *imago mundi*, the cosmic axis; and the surface from which it rises represents Earth (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1973: 3. 362 and Govinda 1976: 14). Here, the threefold Tree signifies firstly the heavenly parasol which is represented by the roof spire, secondly the cosmic axis which is represented by the central post, and thirdly Earth which is represented by the ground upon which the pagoda stands (*Mahāvamsa* XXXI. 91).

¹⁶⁹ The Âmalaka Tree of Hinduism in whose branches Brahmâ, Visnu and Siva dwell is parallel in its symbolic significance to this conception of a Cosmic Tree. As the *Skanda Purâna* describes: "The Sun is in its branches, the gods are in their ramifications and its leaves, floweres and fruits. Thus the Âmalaka is the support of all the gods" (*Vaisnava Khanda* XII. 9-23; Kramrisch 1946: 356).

In terms of the Buddhist Law, through the Tree, all things in the worlds are governed by the Dharma. The symbolism is indicated in *Lalita Vistara* which records "how in a dream the future Buddha saw [a Tree] rise out of the ground and spread its light over the three worlds, presaging the manner in which his Dharma would penetrate and regulate all things" (Snodgrass 1985: 326). Moreover, correlated with the symbolism of the superimposed discs of spire mentioned above, the branches of the Tree, or the multi-canopies of the Cosmic Parasol, also symbolise both the layered heavens which pile up from the summit of Mt. Meru and the spiritual journey of the *arhat* and *bodhisattva* in their pursuit of the highest and most perfect Enlightenment above Mt. Meru. The Tree as a whole is seen as the Tree of Enlightenment.

To sum up, the layers of discs on the middle part of the roof spire of the pagodas like its storeys will be odd in number and range from five to thirteen. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, in relationship with their position on top of the main body of the pagoda, the tiers of discs symbolise the levels of Heaven on top of Mt. Meru, starting from the Yâma Heaven immediately above Mt. Meru and ending with the Akanistha Heaven, the summit of Brahmaloaka (Cf. above 2.4.2.).

As far as the doctrine of Ultimate Return is concerned, the layers of discs thus signify the stages of the spiritual journey above Mt. Meru where the *arhat* and *bodhisattva* pursue the highest and perfect Enlightenment, that is, the final Buddhahood. Moreover, in Buddhist connotation, the discs also symbolise the multiple canopies of the Cosmic Parasol. In Buddhism, the Parasol is regarded as the symbol of the spiritual authority and temporal power of the Buddha. With regards to deeds (*karma*), the erecting of a parasol on top of a pagoda is considered as a meritorious act which will lead the devotee to the realm of Heaven. Located as they are on top of the main body of the pagoda, the discs of the roof spire symbolise not only the spiritual

stages in the realm of Heaven where beings, already freed from the endless cycle of transmigration, are proceeding on to higher states, but are also the emblem of the Buddha who is honoured as the Universal Monarch (Cakravartin), the ruler of the universe.

6.4.2. The gourd and jewel finial

The top end of the roof spire of the pagoda is commonly crowned by a gourd or a jewel (Cf. above Figure 6.21.). The form of the gourd (Figure 6.23.) is evolved from that of the vase (*kalasa*) -- the finial on the Indian *stûpa* (Figure 6.24.). Both the gourd and vase function as a receptacle. In terms of symbolism, the gourd inherits the significance of the Indian vase but also reflects Chinese traditional beliefs. As to the employment of a jewel as an ornament of the pagoda, this practice also originates from the Indian *stûpa* which was often decorated with a jewel finial (Figure 6.25.). In China, apart from crowning pagodas, the jewel finial could also be found adorning the top of beams (Figure 6.26.), and roofs (Figure 6.27.) of temple pavilions. After Buddhism spread from China to Japan, the jewel finial could also be found crowning Japanese Buddhist architecture (Figure 6.28.). Being located at the uppermost point of the building, both the gourd and jewel finial symbolise the perfected Enlightenment, the ultimate goal of every Buddhist doctrine and practice (Snodgrass 1985: 342).

Functioning as it does as a container, the symbolism of the gourd lies in the substance within it, which is generally water. In Buddhism, the water of the gourd finial symbolises Knowledge. The symbolism is based on the correspondence of the seed syllable of water (*vam* in Sanskrit) and that of knowledge. In *mandala* manifestation, the water contained within the five gourds of the five pagodas -- pagodas of the Centre and the four quarters -- represents the five kinds of Buddha-

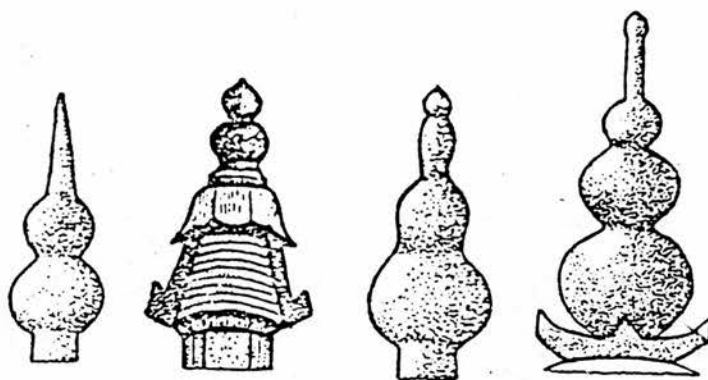


Figure 6.23. Examples of gourd finials of pagodas (Snodgrass 1985: 348)

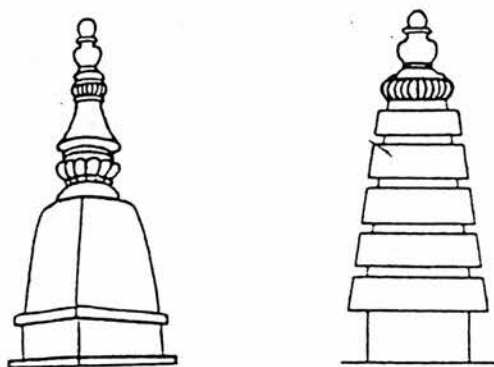


Figure 6.24. Examples of vase finials of *stûpas* (Snodgrass 1985: 342)

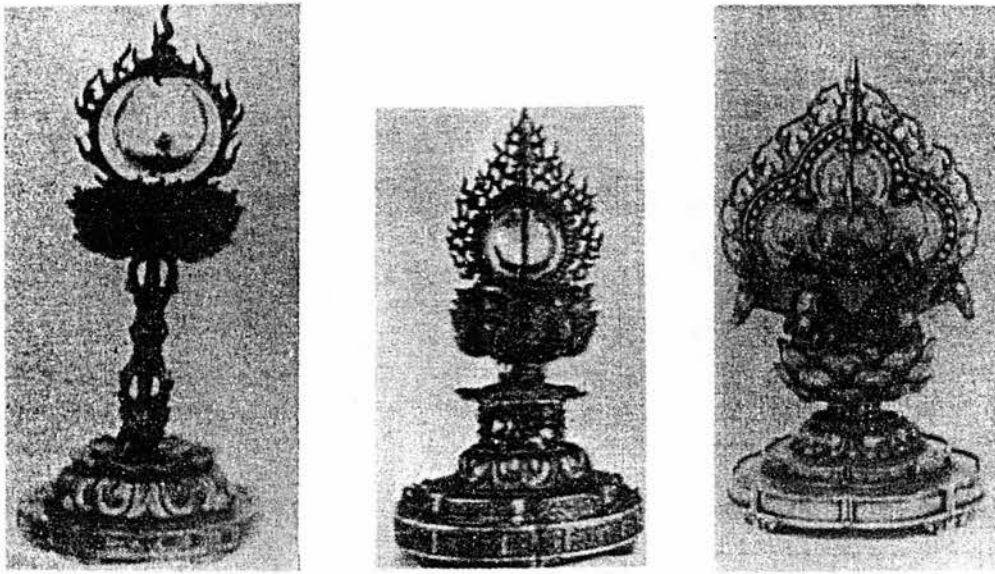


Figure 6.25. Examples of jewel *stûpas* (Snodgrass 1985: 349)

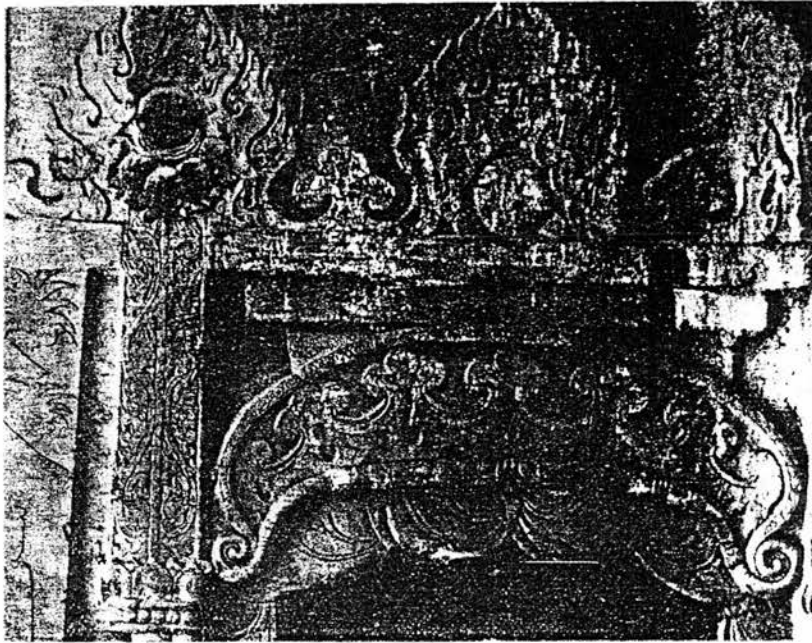


Figure 6.26. Jewel finial adorning the top of beams of temple pavilions, no. 4 cave of Hsiang-t'ang-shan cave temple (bas-relief)
(Liang 1932-: IV, 1, 147, fig. 7)

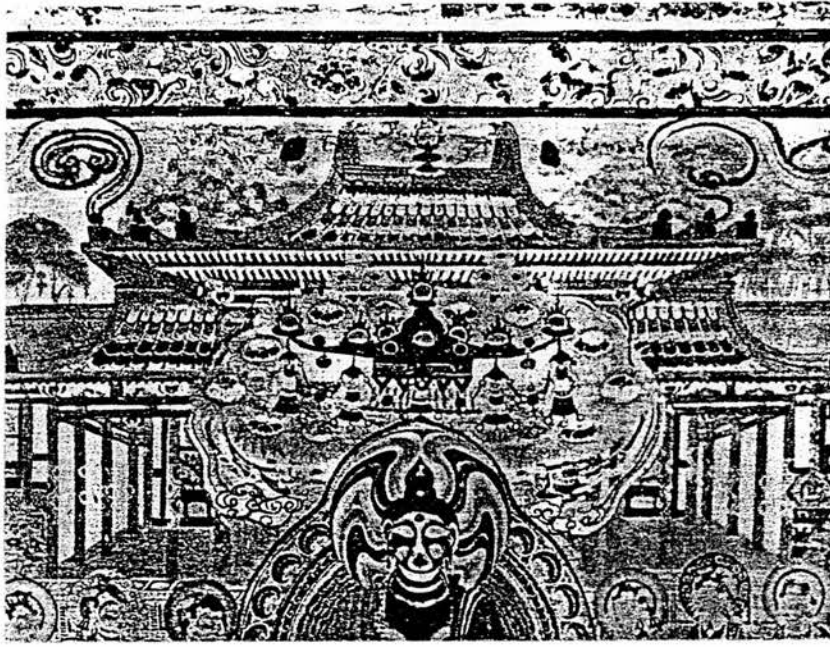


Figure 6.27. Jewel finial adorning the top of roofs of temple pavilions, Tun-huang cave temple (painting) (Liang 1932-: IV, 1, 147, fig. 8)

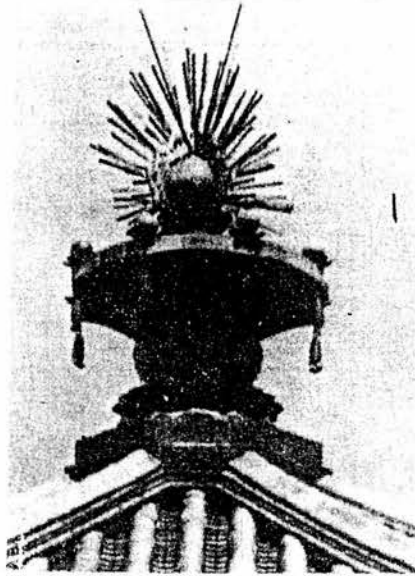


Figure 6.28. Jewel finial on Japanese Buddhist temple pavilion (Snodgrass 1985: 350)

Knowledge, or the Water of total Knowledge. In ritual, the initiate is baptised by water during the initiation ceremony (*abhiseka*) symbolising the attainment of total Knowledge. Apart from water, precious substances such as jewels, medicine, grain, and perfume are often employed to fill the gourd. With all these highly valued substances, the gourd signifies the precious Enlightenment (Snodgrass 1985: 346).

In terms of the spiritual journey above Mt. Meru, the Bodhisattva is baptised by the Water of Knowledge before attaining the state of the Highest Perfect Awakening (*Kôbô Daishi Zenshû* II. 59). On receiving the Water of Knowledge, the Bodhisattva transforms it into a Dharma Cloud and sends it down to nourish all the beings of the world (*Bukkyô Daijiten* 2297ff). In this connection, the final stage of the Stations of Bodhisattva is regarded as both the Station of the Initiation (*abhiseka-bhûmi*) and the Station of the Dharma Cloud (*dharma-megha-bhûmi*) (Edgerton: 1970).

In sum, the gourd is a symbolic receptacle of the total Knowledge of the Buddha which signifies the attainment of the final Enlightenment (*Rokujûkegonkyô* 59; *Taishô* IX. 278. 776; Bosch 1960: 112).

Apart from Knowledge, water also symbolises the purified "Elixir of Life" (*amrta*) which can nourish all beings; because of this, both the water container (the gourd) and, by reference, the pagoda become symbols of immortality. The symbolism originates from Indian Buddhism and also echoes traditional Chinese Taoist belief. In Indian Buddhist belief, the vase of the *stûpa* is made out of the different parts of gods by Visvakarman, and, because of its sacred nature, it turns the water inside it into the Elixir of Immortality (*amrta*). The vase as a whole is seen as a symbol of immortality (*Mahâ-nirvâna sûtra* V. 181). Moreover, the vase, being placed on the top of the *stûpa*, symbolises the Sun which, stationed permanently on the summit of Mt. Meru,

represents the Doorway to Immortality (Kramrisch 1946: 355). In relationship with the solar symbolism of the vase, the gourd finial of the pagoda becomes "the visible sign of this invisible Solar Gate" (Snodgrass 1985: 344) leading to Immortality.

In Taoist belief, the gourd is also seen as a symbol of immortality. "The sacred gourd grows on the isle of the immortals, where its vine connects Earth and Heaven. Its seed are the food of immortality and are ritually eaten at the time of the spring equinox, the time of renewal and regeneration" (Snodgrass 1985: 347). In this connection, to crown a pagoda with a gourd is to indicate that the building is immortal (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1973: 1. 116).

In Buddhist metaphor, the water in the gourd also represents the inner Mind of beings. The full gourd signifies that the inner Mind of beings is enlightened (Saunders 1960: 192ff), the half-filled gourd that the Mind is ignorant (*Suttinipâta* 721).

In outer appearance, the gourd is formed from two spheres, one above the other, as shown in Figure 6.29. As far as the spiritual journey of the Bodhisattva above Mt. Meru is concerned, these two spheres symbolise the final two stages of the Bodhisattva, that is, the stage of Similar Enlightenment and the stage of Wondrous Enlightenment, which are two levels of the supreme and perfect Awakening (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) (See above 6.4.1.). The two spheres also represent the state of *nirvâna*, since two dots placed vertically one over the other (:) are regarded as the *nirvâna* points. These *nirvâna* points are so called because as a written symbol placed after a seed syllable they add an unvoiced aspirate *h*, which, in the interpretation of the Hinayâna Buddhists, means *visarga* or "Liberation" (Macdonell 1929).

To explain this further, the syllable *a*, for example, represents the unconscious state of the mind before Enlightenment. By adding the *nirvâna* points to the syllable *a*,

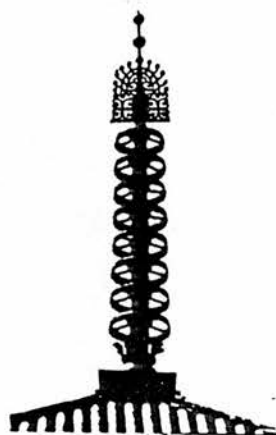


Figure 6.29. The two sphere gourd finial (Snodgrass 1985: 348)



Figure 6.30. The seed syllable *ah*, with the *nirvâna* points added to the syllable *a* (Snodgrass 1985: 348)

as shown in Figure 6.30. (Cf. above Figure 2.22.), the syllable becomes *ah*, symbolising the fact that the mind has been fully awakened (*Mikkyô Daijiten* 1781). In other words, the adding of the two dots transfers that which the syllable signifies into the realised state of *nirvâna*. As Snodgrass (1985: 348) points out,

"[The pagoda] embodies the Buddha's Dharma; it represents the totality of the Buddha's sonorous utterance. The *nirvâna* points at the summit of [the pagoda] transpose this body of Dharma sound from the physical to the metaphysical plane."

When the gourd is placed on a semicircular base, as shown in Figure 6.31., the finial also represents the Void point with a spatial and sonorous significance. In spatial terms, the Void point represents the Progenitive Centre with its characteristic of "dimensionlessness", or Voidness. That is to say, within the Centre, all manifestations are free from the limitations of the physical dimension, and from the Centre, all manifestations transfer into "spatially extended existence" (Snodgrass 1985: 346).

The sonorous significance of the Void point lies in the literal meaning of its Sanskrit word *anusvâra* -- "the following sound". In etymology, when the Void point -- a point and a semicircle -- is added on top of a seed syllable, it will absorb the final sound of the syllable and transfer the unconscious state of the syllable meaning into the fully realised state of the Void. For example, the Sanskrit syllable *a*, as mentioned above, represents the unrealised state of the Enlightened Mind (*bodhicitta*). By adding the Void-point sign to the top of this syllable, as shown in Figure 6.32., the mind of a being will be transferred from the unrealised state into the state of Void (*Subhâkarasimha* 10; *Mikkyô Daijiten* 326). The significance of the state of Void here lies in the doctrine of the Void (*sûnyatâ*) which specifies that all beings should empty their minds so as to realise the Truth (Glasenapp 1944: 99).

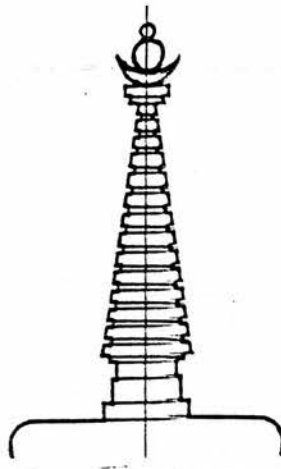


Figure 6.31. The Void point -- gourd on a semicircular base (Snodgrass 1985: 347)

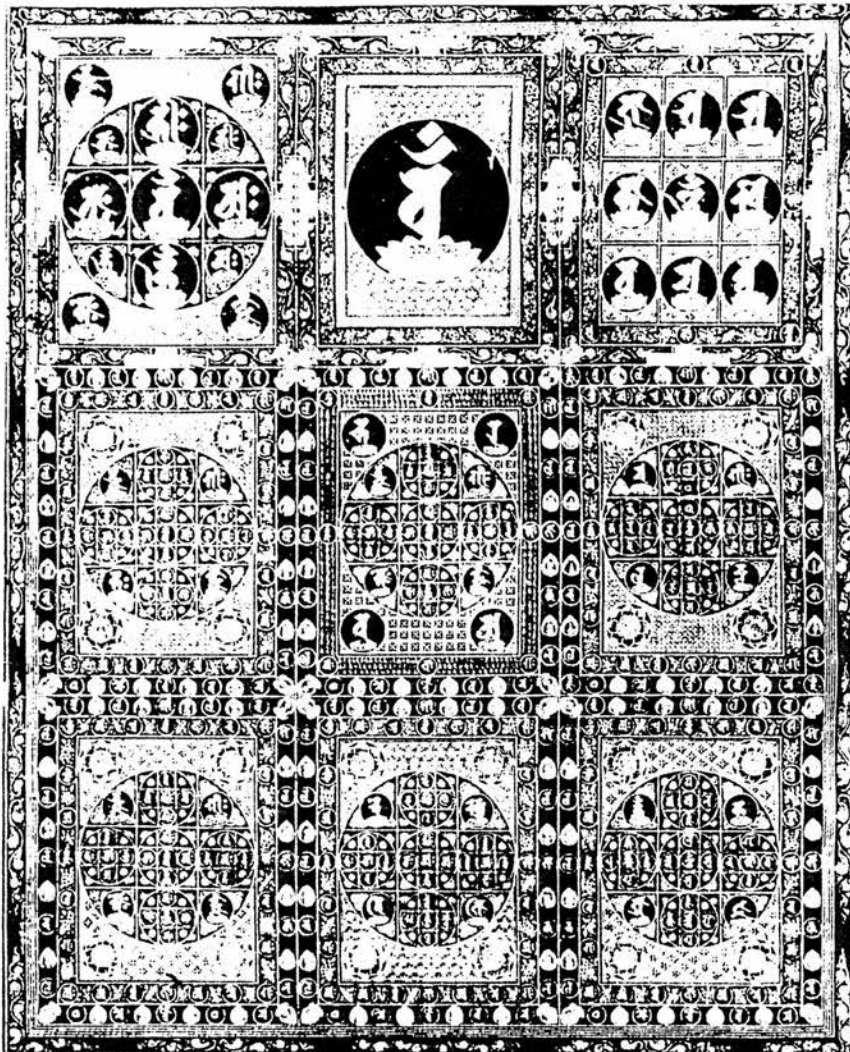


Figure 6.32. The seed syllable *am*, with the Void points added to the syllable *a* ,
appearing in the Diamond World Mandala
(Snodgrass 1985: 347 and Coomaraswamy 1979, fig. 33)

When it comes to the jewel finial, being placed at the peak of the pagoda, it too symbolises the final Enlightenment. In terms of the Five Elements,¹⁷⁰ the jewel, which is regarded as the Ether Element (*ākāsa*) as shown in Figure 6.33., symbolises the invisible, infinite, all-radiant Consciousness (*vinñānam*) (Snodgrass 1985: 349 & 374). The symbolism is revealed in the discourse between the Buddha and his disciples:

"Where do Earth, Water, Fire and Air come to an end ?" "Not thus, O monk, is the question to be put, but: where is it that these Elements find no footing ? -- And the answer is: in the invisible, infinite, all-radiant Consciousness (*vinñānam*). There neither Earth nor Water, neither Fire nor Air can find a footing" (*Kevaddha-Sutta*; Govinda: 1959: 58).

The "invisible, infinite, all-radiant Consciousness" (*vinñānam*) here is regarded as synonymous with *nirvāna* in the *Visuddhimarga* (Govinda 1959: 58). The ethereal jewel, as the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey -- *nirvāna* -- is also identified with Diamond (*vajra*). In Buddhism, Diamond, the strongest and hardest substance in the world, signifies the Buddha's Knowledge (*prajñā*) by which ignorance is smashed and Enlightenment achieved.

In terms of its outer appearance, the jewel has a flame leaping outwards which symbolises the radiation of the Dharma throughout the world: the jewel is regarded as the Dharma, and the flames, as the radiance. The jewel finial, being placed at the peak of the pagoda, signifies that the world is illuminated by the Dharma light (Figure 6.34.). Among the Buddhist deities, the Buddhas Sâkyamuni and Ratnaketu are the two most frequently associated with the Illumination of the Dharma. For the Buddha Sâkyamuni, the significance of the Illumination of the Dharma is reflected in his portrait. On the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall, he is often portrayed seated, with fiery flames behind him. The iconography signifies that his Dharma is illuminating the world, as shown in Figure 6.35. As to the Buddha Ratnaketu, he is

¹⁷⁰ In Buddhist connotation, the Five Elements -- Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether -- are the fundamental elements that constitute the universe.

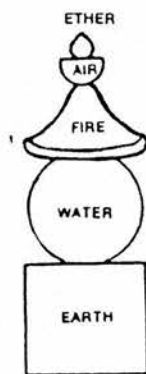


Figure 6.33. Five Elements of the pagoda (Govinda 1976: 95)

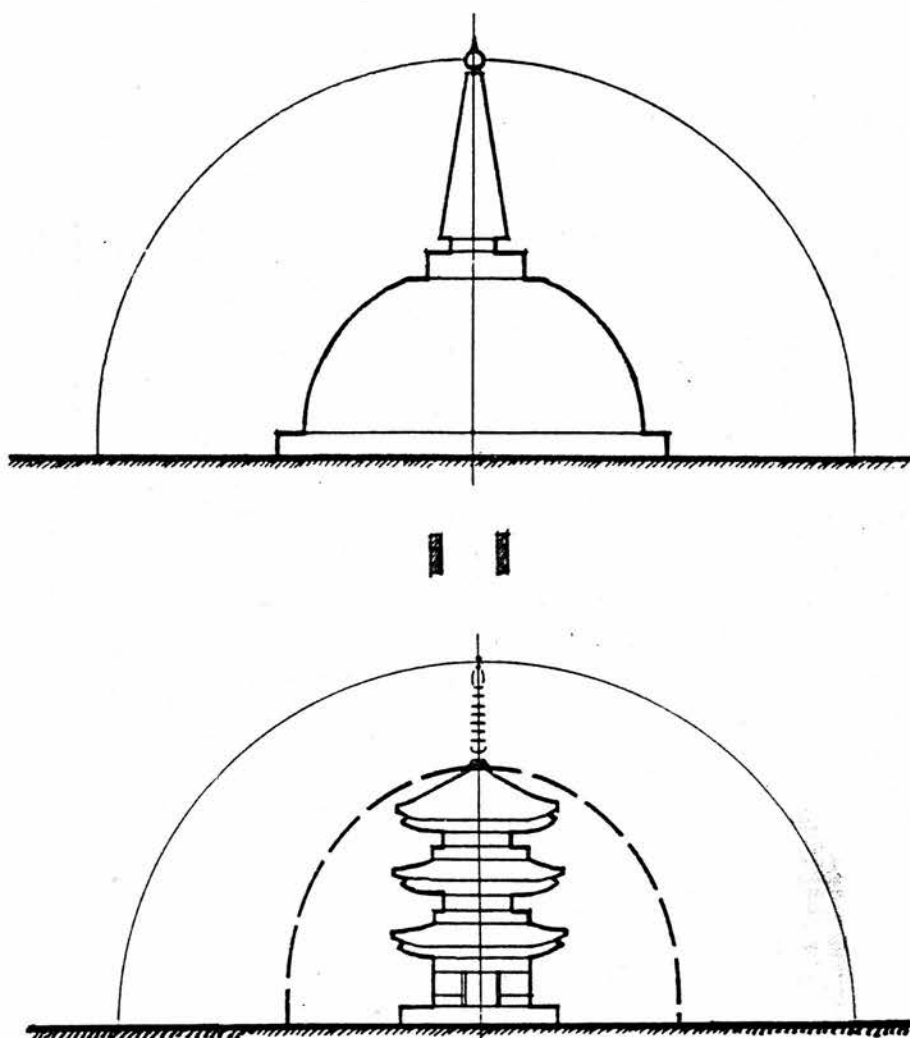


Figure 6.34. The jewel at the apex of the pagoda's invisible dome (Author; cf. Snodgrass 1985: 352)



Figure 6.35. Image of the fiery Buddha Sâkyamuni, Northern Wei dynasty (Yeh and P'an 1989: 43).

the Governor of the East. In connection with the daily course of the sun, the Buddha personifies the sun of the East, and embodies the eminent Light. With this Light of Wisdom, he drives away the darkness of ignorance and reveals the Dharma throughout the world. As far as the spiritual journey is concerned, he represents the Jewel Light that inspires the devotee to defeat the invasion of Darkness, and to attain the Mind of Enlightenment (*bodhicitta*).

The rounded shapes of the jewel finials, correlate with the symbolism of the dome of the *stûpa*, that is, they are symbolic containers of the world. If the invisible dome that encloses the pagoda covers the field of Midspace (Cf. above Figure 6.17. and 6.34.), then the jewel, being located at the peak of the mast, signifies the "all-containing and cosmic plenitude" (Snodgrass 1985: 350). As Snodgrass (1985: 352) points out, the jewel is the "unique Principle of the whole cosmos", the "symbol of the indestructible and indivisible unity of the Principle of manifestation (*aksara*)". Stationed in the centre of an invisible cupola, the jewel functions as the "keystone" (*Eckstein*) (Coomaraswamy 1939: 66ff), and finally, correlated with the mid-noon Sun, the jewel symbolises the Sun gate, the Gate to the Buddha realm.

To sum up, both the gourd and jewel finials, being the crowning glory of the ultimate pinnacle of the pagoda, symbolise the Perfect Awakening, the state of Buddhahood. Of these two finials, the gourd functions as a vessel for depositing both water and treasured substances such as jewel, medicine, grain, and perfume. The water carrying gourd symbolises the Buddha Knowledge and the gourd with these other valuable substances within it represents the precious final Enlightenment. Apart from symbolising the supreme Knowledge, the water deposited in the gourd is also seen as the purified "Elixir of Life". In this connection, the pagoda with a gourd finial becomes a symbol of immortality. In terms of its outer appearance, the gourd, which is formed by two superimposed spheres as the so-called *nirvâna* point (:), symbolises

metaphysically the state of final *nirvâna*. Moreover, when the gourd is placed on a semicircular base forming the so-called Void point, it represents esoterically the state of Void, or Emptiness (For the doctrine of Emptiness, see above 2.2.2., 2.4.2., 2.5.1.) In this way, the gourd finial transposes the pagoda from the physical to the metaphysical plane.

As to the jewel finial, it also symbolises the final Enlightenment -- the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey. With regards to the Five Elements (See above) that constitute the universe, the jewel is identified with the topmost Ether Element (*âkâsa*), and, as such, symbolises the invisible, infinite, all-radiant Consciousness (*vinnânam*). Moreover, the etherial jewel is also identified with the Diamond (*vajra*). Given the nature of the Diamond -- the strongest and hardest substance in the world -- the jewel finial signifies here the mighty Buddha Knowledge (*prajñâ*) which crashes through all the ignorance and craving that beings possess. By its outwards flame, the jewel finial radiates the Buddha's Dharma all over the world. In this way, the jewel finial, being placed at the peak of the pagoda as the keystone of the invisible dome that encloses the pagoda, signifies that the world is illuminated by the Dharma light -- the ultimate Principle of the whole universe.

6.5. THE CAVE

The Chinese cave temple originates from the Indian cave temples (Figure 6.36.), which are shrines cut out of the rock of mountain sides used to house Buddha images and as a serene and quiet place for spiritual cultivation (Figure 6.37.). In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the cave signifies the sacred space wherein the spiritual journey of the devotee takes place. In other words, the devotee enters the cave to proceed on his spiritual path towards the Centre, or Enlightenment. Moreover,

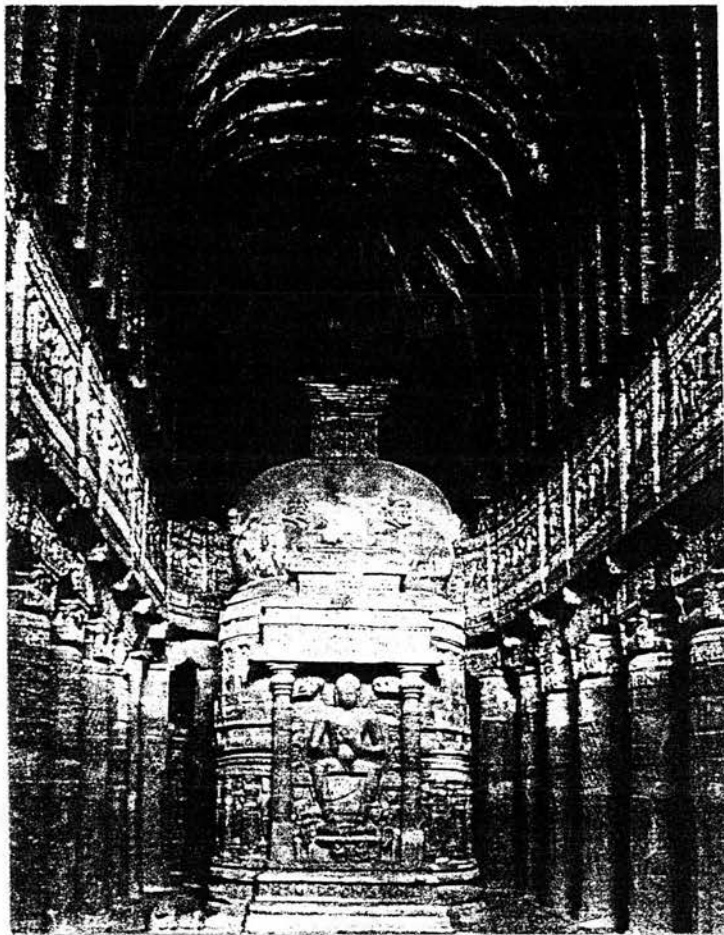


Figure 6.36. Interior of cave temple, Ajanta (Mittra 1971, fig. 112)

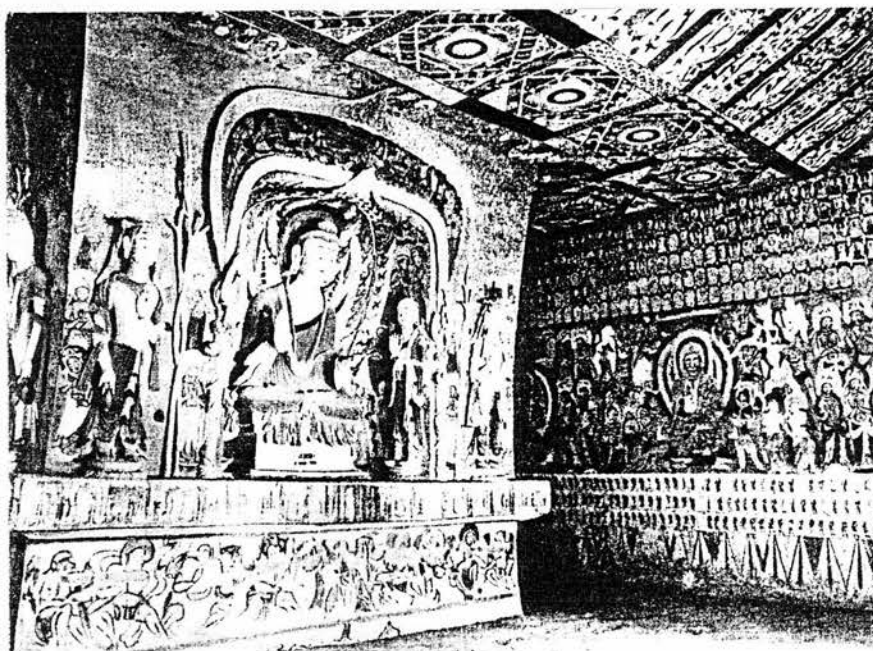


Figure 6.37. Interior of no. 428 cave, Tun-huang cave temple (Tregear 1980: 75)

owing to its location inside the mountain, the cave possesses the characteristics of darkness and concealment. These characteristics are expressed in Sanskrit etymology. In Sanskrit, the word *guha* -- cave -- is derived from the root *guh*, which means "to cover, or to hide".

In this context, Enlightenment is seen as being accomplished by the devotee in concealment and in darkness. This accords with the symbolism embedded in the legend in which the Buddha fought against the evil Mâra in order to attain Enlightenment. As has been described in 5.3.3., the fight started soon after sunset, and lasted for a whole dark night. In the battle,

"... as darkness pervaded the world, [the Buddha] concentrated his mind and began a meditational ascent of the world's axis, rising to over higher planes of insight and understanding" (Warren 1922: 83).

By sunrise, the Buddha had defeated the Mâra and achieved the state of *nirvâna*. Literally, the battle through the dark night is regarded as the spiritual journey of the devotee towards the final destination -- Enlightenment.

In Buddhism, there are many stages along the spiritual path before the attainment of Enlightenment. The journey of the devotee is seen as a series of deaths and rebirths: death to a lower state of existence and the rebirth into a higher one. In the case of the cave temple, entering into the dark cave from the daylight symbolises embarkation upon the spiritual journey -- and death to the Realm of Desire; walking out of the cave back into daylight represents the completion of the journey -- and second birth into the Realm of Form where sentient beings are exempted from the endless cycle of transmigration. As Snodgrass (1985: 202) puts it,

"Symbolically, the former is a return to or a concentration within the central point of the circle of the world, an arrival at the peak of the mountain or an entry into the cave; whereas the latter is a passage through the apex of the cave, an exit from and leaving behind of the manifested universe in its entirety".

As far as its physical silhouette is concerned, the cave forms the invisible canopy of the pagoda, and corresponds to the dome of the *stûpa* (Cf. above Figure 6.16.). Architectural evidence for this is found in the Yûn-kang cave temple where the pagoda is placed at the Centre of the cave, as shown in Figure 6.38. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the cave, like the dome, symbolises the Egg of Ignorance, which derived from a Brahmanic belief. Among the Brahmanic deities, Brahmâ (the God of Creation), Prajâpati (the Father of Creators), and Angi, (the sacrificial Fire) all emerge from the Cosmic Egg (Snodgrass 1985: 195-6). In Buddhism, the Cosmic Egg is regarded as the Egg of Ignorance, the spiritual stage before the attainment of Buddhahood. The hatching of the Egg of Ignorance is another image for the achievement of Enlightenment, and obviously the interior of the cave evokes the enclosure of an egg. Equally, emerging from it, into the light equates to bursting out from the shell. The symbolism is reflected in the discourse of the Buddha which is recorded in *Suttavibhanga* (*Pârâjika* I.1.4.; Eliade 1961: 77):

"When a hen has laid eggs, eight, ten or a dozen; when the hen has sat upon them and kept them warm long enough -- then, when one of those chicks, the first one to break the shell with the point of its claw or its beak, comes safely out of the egg, what will they call that chick -- the eldest or the youngest? 'They will call him the eldest, venerable Gautama, for he is the first born among them'. 'So likewise, O brahman, I alone, among all those who live in ignorance and are as though enclosed and imprisoned in an egg, have burst through this shell of ignorance; I alone have attained to the eldest, the noblest among beings'".

The aim of the spiritual journey in the cave is to break out of the Egg of Ignorance, "to transcend the spatial and temporal bondage of existence, [and] to escape from the thrall of *samsâra*" (Snodgrass 1985: 196).

To sum up, the cave in Buddhism functions as a serene, quiet and dark place for spiritual cultivation. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the cave signifies the sacred and dark space wherein the devotee embarks on his spiritual journey towards the Centre, or Enlightenment. Entering into the dark cave from daylight



Figure 6.38. Central column, of no. 2 cave, Yün-kang cave temple (Hsieh 1987: 9)

symbolises death to the Realm of Desire, and walking out of the cave back into daylight represents the second birth into the Realm of Form where beings cease transmigrating. In other words, the acts of the entering into the dark cave and walking out of it again represent the spiritual ascent of the devotee from Kâmadhâtu to Rûpadhâtu. The symbolism is testified to in the legend in which the Buddha fought against the evil Mâra, starting soon after sunset, and finally defeating the Mâra after a whole night and achieving the state of Arhat at sunrise.

With regards to its physical silhouette, the cave, which forms the invisible cupola of the pagoda, symbolises the Egg of Ignorance. In this connection, the spiritual journey of the devotee in the cave represents metaphysically the hatching of the Egg of Ignorance: entering the cave, which corresponds to the enclosure of the Egg, symbolises embarkation upon the spiritual journey and death to the Realm of Desire; and walking out of the cave, which equates with bursting out of the Egg, represents the completion of the journey -- or second birth into the Realm of Form. The spiritual journey in the cave is figured in several ways, but in each case the aim is the transcendence of the devotee from the bondage of the endless cycle of transmigration into the state of Arhat.

CHAPTER 7

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ICONOGRAPHY

7.1. INTRODUCTION

Essentially, iconography is employed in Buddhism to serve as a symbol of the Buddha and his doctrine. In primitive Buddhism (Hinayâna), the Buddha was regarded as a human teacher. The symbols dedicated to the glorification of him during this epoch are mostly derived from scenes of his life, and they include for example the footprint, the wheel, the lotus, the Bodhi tree, the throne, and so on. The wheel and lotus often appear along with the print of the Buddha's feet, as shown in Figure 7.1. These symbols are found all over the Indian Buddhist monuments. Later, with the introduction of Mahâyâna Buddhism, the Buddha was no longer regarded as a human teacher; rather, he was deified, and worshipped as a Universal Saviour. Devotees in this era were not satisfied with conceptual motifs, they wanted, instead, the Buddha's presence and ideas to be directly represented by his image. From this period onward, images both of the Buddha himself and of other deities jointed the traditional symbols of Buddhism and took their places in Buddhist sanctuaries.

In the spread of the Buddhism to China, these symbols, both the metaphysical figures and the images, were introduced into the Buddhist temple premises and sinicised. Of the early notional patterns, some lost their predominant positions within the premises in the course of sinicisation; the wheel and the lotus, however, remain the primary elements of the Chinese Buddhist iconography, as either shown together (Figure 7.2.), or employed independently as the ornaments of Buddhist images and architecture (Figure 7.3.).

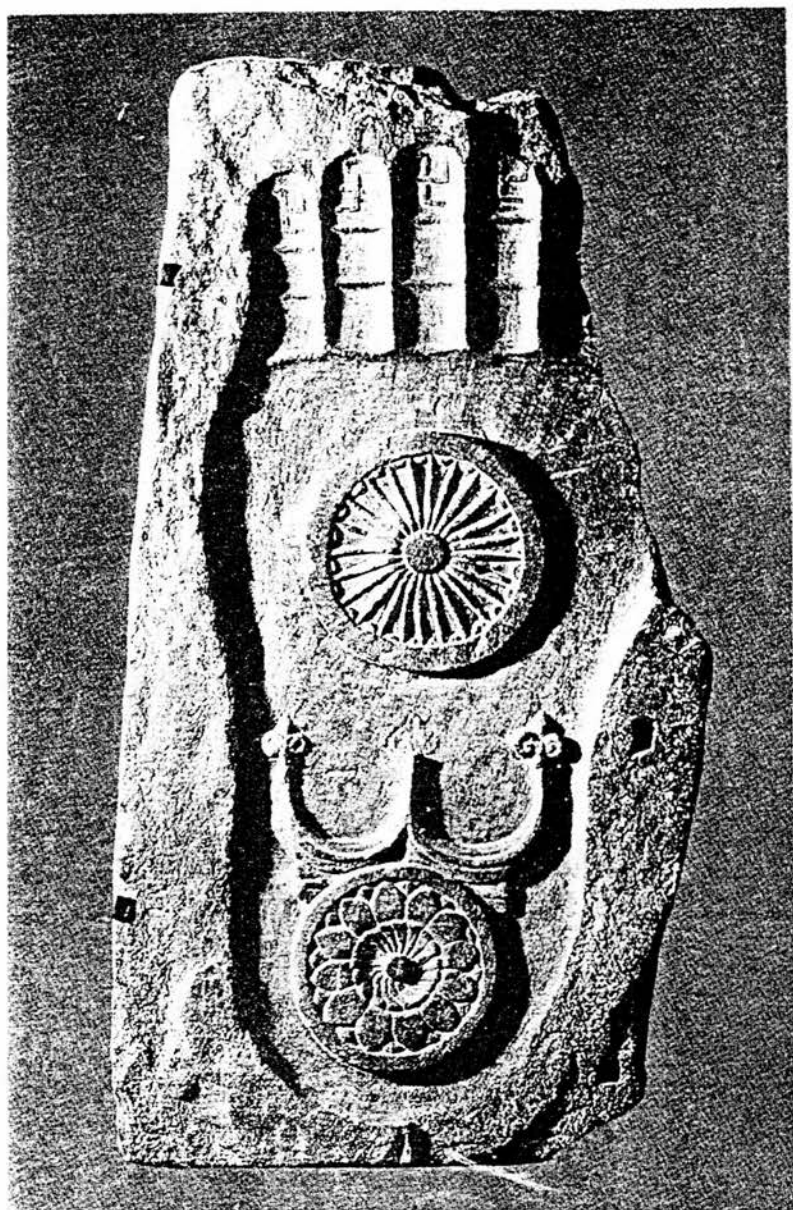


Figure 7.1. Icons of wheel and lotus, found along with print of the Buddha's foot (Lai 1986: 201)

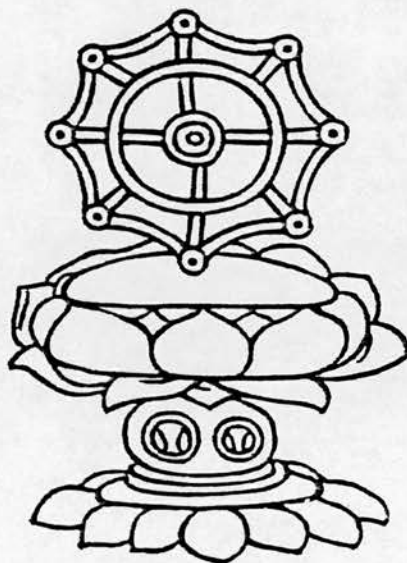


Figure 7.2. Symbols of wheel and lotus manifested together in a banner, Tun-huang cave temple (Coomaraswamy 1979: 32)

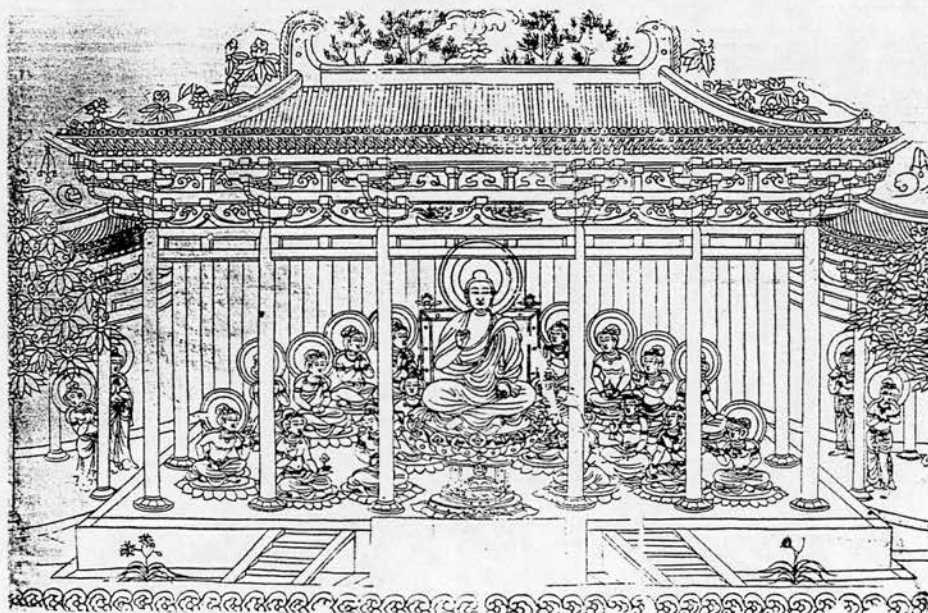


Figure 7.3. A T'ang dynasty temple engraved on a pediment from T'a-yen-t'a, the "Greater Wild Goose Pagoda" (Fisher 1993: 113)

They originated from Hinayâna Buddhism, and apart from representing the Buddha himself, in terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, both symbolise the Origin of the world. Both the hub of the Wheel and the heart of the Lotus represent the Sun from which the eternal solar rays are radiated and which bring forth all multiplicity, including the space of all directions and all beings, into existence. The solar rays, the medium of this cosmic transmission, are represented by both the spokes of the Wheel and the petals of the Lotus. Both the spokes and the petals are characteristically even in number, and signify a corresponding number of spatial directions of the world.

Whereas they share this symbolism of the Centre, the wheel and the lotus have other, different, interpretations as well. In Buddhist doctrine, the wheel signifies the Wheel of the Dharma (*Dharma-cakra*), the rotation of which symbolises the preaching of the Dharma by the Buddha to save all sentient beings from suffering. Moreover, in Buddhist cosmology, the wheel symbolises the Wheel of Existence (*Samsâra-cakra*), within which beings transmigrate from one of the six modes of existence (heavenly gods, human beings, Asuras, beasts, ghosts, and damned beings) to another in an incessant sequence.

As to the lotus, in terms of the supermundane Buddhist kingdom, it symbolises the Womb of the Buddhahood (*tathâgata-garbha*), from which all Buddhas were brought forth to fill the whole celestial world: the manifestation of this Buddha pantheon lies in the doctrine of the *mandala* (See above 4.4.). Here, the Lotus, or the Womb, is considered as the spiritual ground which nourishes the seed (*bîja*) of the Buddhahood. In the view of the Pure Land school, this seed is embedded in the Lotus in the pond of the Pure Land; to make it grow, that is, to achieve Buddhahood, the devotee needs to utter the name of the Amitâbha Buddha (See above 2.5.2.). In contrast, in the concept of the Ch'an school, this seed resides within the innermost

Centre of beings; to awaken it, that is, to attain the state of Buddha, the devotee has to practise the intuitive technique (See above 2.5.1.).

As to the Buddhist images, in the course of the spread, all the hordes of the Buddhist pantheon were introduced into the temple premises. This resulted in the addition of new buildings to accommodate them -- extra to the original and fundamental "seven halls" of the temple. On the central longitudinal axis, for example, the Heavenly Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien* 天王殿) was built to house images of the Four Heavenly Kings and the other devas as was the Bodhisattva Hall (*p'u-sa-tien* 菩薩殿), for deities such as Avalokitesvara, (Kuan-yin 觀音, "Goddess of Mercy") (Figure 7.4.). On the lateral axes, there was the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall (*wan-fo-tien* 萬佛殿) which was for enshrining the whole pantheon of Buddhas; the Patriarch Hall (*tsu-shih-t'ang* 祖師堂) for the patriarchs of each school; and the Five-hundred Arhat Hall (*wu-pei-lo-han-t'ang* 五百羅漢堂) for the huge number of Buddhist saints (*arhats*) (See above 3.3.3.).

Apart from considerations I have mentioned earlier, such as the religious ideas of the temple, the individual taste of the abbot in charge, and the advice of pious donors, Chinese Buddhists were at liberty to take from the pantheon whichever and as many deities as they chose. That even meant Indian gods such as Brahma, known as Ta-fan-t'ien-shen (大梵天神), Indra or Ti-shih-tsun-shen (帝釋尊神), and the lord of hades or Yen-lo-t'ien-tzu (閻羅天子), and native deities and traditional guardians still important to the Chinese like the God of Literature, Wen-ch'ang (文昌), the God of War, Kuan-ti (關帝), and even the Chinese kitchen god, Tsao-shen (灶神), all of whom have been admitted into the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple (See above 5.4.2.). There are also tremendous numbers of Buddhist deities whose names are unknown, but who are worshipped collectively in the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall and the Five-hundred Arhat Hall.

In other words, there are altogether thousands of Buddhist deities, either specified or anonymous, enshrined in the temple. There is no room in this thesis to introduce them all. It is, however, the primary gods, namely, the trinity, the four heavenly kings, the commander general Wei-t'o and the two guardian generals, who are the essential ones. The disposition of these images in the halls on the central longitudinal axis is in keeping with the hierarchy of these buildings -- the spatial organisation of which, in terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, is formulated to reveal the specific Buddhist hierarchy and ceremonial order. In Buddhist connotation, the procession through these halls symbolises the progression of the devotee in the spiritual journey towards the Centre, i.e. towards the attainment of the state of *nirvâna*.

In most cases, the Great Buddha Hall represents the spiritual and architectural centre of the temple, and the final destination of the journey.¹⁷¹ The primary deities enshrined in this hall form a trinity, and are placed on the central altar. The doctrinal basis of this trinity is the doctrine of the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*san-pao*): the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Initially, the trinity on the Buddhist high altar would consist of three Buddhas, each representing one of the Three Jewels. In course of time, the symbolism of the trinity grew to include a variety of other religious doctrines, and, in some cases, the divine trio did not consist exclusively of Buddhas, but of Bodhisattvas and even Arhats as well. Their presence in the trinity brought with it various specific religious symbolisms. For instance, the Bodhisattva Avalôkitêsvara (Kuan-yin) is particularly associated with mercy and compassion and is renowned for saving sentient beings; on the other hand, the Bodhisattva Maitrêya (Mi-lo-fo) is

¹⁷¹ In the early spread of Buddhism, the pagoda represents the spiritual and architectural centre of the temple; in Ch'an temples, the Dharma Hall is the spiritual and architectural centre of the temple. (See above 5.4.3. and 5.4.5.)

regarded in Buddhism as the Messiah who will control the propagation of the faith in ages to come.

As to other primary deities (the four heavenly kings, commander general Weit'o and the two guardian generals), their images can be found throughout the three leading halls on the central longitudinal axis, but mostly feature in the entrance gate and the Heavenly Kings' Hall, only occasionally in the Great Buddha Hall. As far as religious function is concerned, their roles in the Great Buddha Hall is to serve as guardians of the Buddhist kingdom and Dharma, in the Heavenly Kings' Hall, as protectors of the Buddhist faithful on the spiritual journey, and at the entrance gate, as defenders of the temple premises. These respective duties reflect the hierarchy of the buildings on the central longitudinal axis.

7.2. THE WHEEL

In Buddhist iconography, the general scheme of the wheel consists of a fellow, a hub and an even number of spokes. The morphology of this Wheel (Figure 7.5.) symbolises the overall structure of the cosmos (Snodgrass 1985: 79-81): the fellow is Earth, the Many, all the manifestations of the world; the hub is Heaven, the One, the Centre of the world; and the spokes are the *axis mundi*, the channel that connects Heaven and Earth, the One and the Many, the Centre and all the manifestations of the world. The communication channel operates in both directions: all the axial radii of the Wheel both radiate from and are united at the navel. In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the radiation outward signifies the cosmogenesis of the world; in terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the uniting at the navel signifies the spiritual journey of the devotee "returning" back to the Centre of the world.

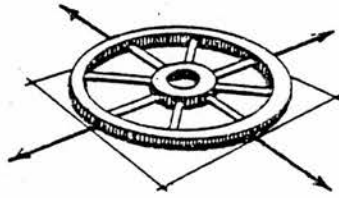


Figure 7.5. General scheme of wheel (Snodgrass 1985: 78)



Figure 7.6. The Sun Wheel, supported by the elephants of the four directions (Snodgrass 1985: 71) -- (Left)

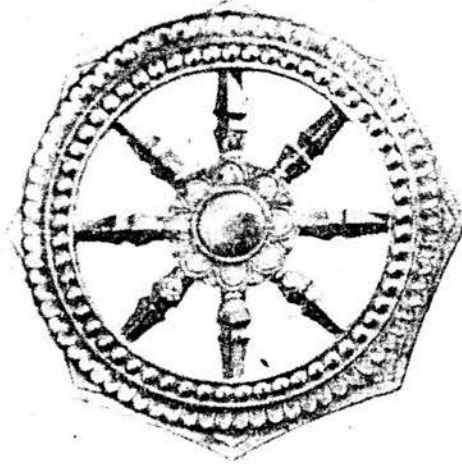


Figure 7.7. Eight-spoked Wheel, signifying the Eight-fold Path (Snodgrass 1985: 175) -- (Right)

In Buddhism, the hub of the Wheel is seen as a symbol of the Sun, in deference to Brahmanic tradition. In Brahmanism, the deity Âni, stationed in the hub of the wheel, is regarded as the Supernal Sun, in whom all created things inhere (*Rg Veda* VIII. 41.6). According to Buddhist Tantric myth (Tucci 1961: 26), the body of the Great Goddess is said to stretch out in all direction, as the eternal rays shining forth from the Sun. In Buddhism, due to the multiplicity of solar symbolism, there are many other figures associated with the Wheel, such as the Buddha, the Void (*sûnyatâ*), the Womb, and the Centre.

The Sun which is represented by the hub of the Wheel is stationed at the apex of the world axis and shines from the summit of Mt Meru in all the cardinal directions. This is expressed in a Buddhist sculpture in which the wheel is borne by the elephants of four directions (*dig-gajas*), as shown in Figure 7.6. Here, the pillar on which the wheel is stationed, as has been explored in 6.2., represents the world axis and Mt. Meru both of which stand between Heaven and Earth (Kramrisch 1946: 355).

In the Wheel, the spokes represent the rays of the Sun shining over the whole universe. In contrast to the storeys of the pagoda and the discs of its roof spire which are odd in number (See above 6.3 and 6.4.1.), the spokes of the wheel are characterised by their even number. In Buddhist cosmology, the four-spoked Wheel signifies the four cardinal directions (East, South, West and North) and the four seasons (Guénon 1962: 85 f). Also, in terms of Buddhist doctrine, the Wheel represents the Four Noble Truths (*si-sheng-ti* 四聖諦, *chatvâri-ârya-satyâni*) of Buddhism. The six-spoked Wheel represents both the six spatial directions (the four cardinal directions, the zenith and the nadir) and the Wheel of Existence (*Samsâra-cakra*): it is in fact "a diagram of the disposition, at once spatial and temporal, of the six realms (*loka*), through which beings migrate in an unending round of rebirths"

(Snodgrass 1985: 82). The eight-spoked Wheel symbolises the eight spatial directions (four cardinal and four intermediate directions). As far as the Buddhist doctrine is concerned, the eight-spoked Wheel signifies the Eight-fold Path (*pa-cheng-tao* 八正道, *ashtāṅgika mārga*) of Buddhism (Figure 7.7.). The ten-spoked Wheel symbolises the ten spatial directions (four cardinal, four intermediate, the zenith, and the nadir). The twelve-spoked Wheel represents the twelve months of the year and the zodiac.

As has been discussed in 2.4.1., the Four Noble Truths are: first; life is suffering (*ku* 苦, *dukkha*); secondly, this suffering has a cause (*chi* 集, *samudaya*); thirdly, the suffering can be removed (*mie* 滅, *nirodha*) ; fourthly, there is a way leading to the removal of the cause (*tao* 道, *mārga*). Moreover, the Eight-fold Path is comprised of the right view (*cheng-chien* 正見, *samyag-drishti*), the right thoughts (*cheng-si* 正思, *samyak-sankalpa*), the right speech (*cheng-yü* 正語, *samyag-vāk*), the right action (*cheng-yeh* 正業, *samyak-karmānta*), the right means of livelihood (*cheng-ming* 正命, *samyag-ājīva*), the right exertion (*cheng-ch'in* 正勤, *samyag-vyāyama*), the right mindfulness (*cheng-nien* 正念, *samyak-smṛiti*), and the right meditation (*cheng-ting* 正定, *samyak-samādha*).

In Buddhism, these two doctrines form the principal parts of the Dharma. In this context, the Wheel as a whole symbolises the Wheel of the Dharma (*Dharma-cakra*). "[It] is the Wheel of Principle, the wheel that rotates around the central axle-point of Truth" (Snodgrass 1985: 85). The rotation of the Wheel of the Dharma, which happens when the Buddha preaches the Dharma, possesses a three-fold meaning, symbolising firstly the preaching of the Dharma, secondly the deity who preaches the Dharma (the Buddha), and thirdly the Dharma itself. Moreover, the icon of the Wheel, which is often found along with the print of the Buddha's feet, as shown in Figure 7.8., symbolises the Buddha's itinerary and proclaims his supremacy over the cosmos (Bosch 1960: 159).

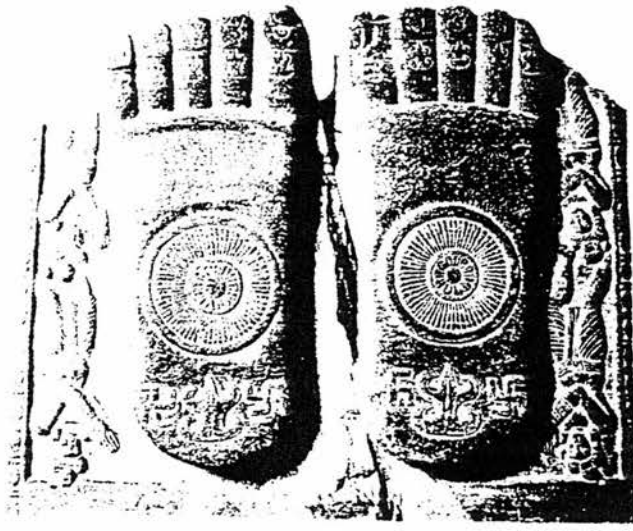


Figure 7.8. Icons of wheel found along with the print of Buddha's feet (Coomaraswamy 1979, fig. 13)



Figure 7.9. The Wheel of Existence (Hopkins 1992: 18-19)

The six-spoked Wheel, as mentioned above, represents the Wheel of Existence (*Samsâra-cakra*), as illustrated in Figure 7.9. Here, the six spokes of the Wheel symbolise the six states of existence: heavenly gods, human beings, demi-gods (Asuras), beasts, ghosts, and damned beings (See above 2.4.2.). In Buddhist terminology, these six existences represent the entirety of the manifestations of the cosmos. Therefore, the Wheel symbolises the whole cosmos. Moreover, these six states of existence bind closely together as a cycle. According to Buddhism, beings transmigrate from one existence to another in an incessant sequence. The death of one existence means the birth of the next existence. The Wheel as a whole represents the cyclic existence of the beings.

The never-ending transmigration of beings is caused by the three levels of defiled mind: firstly, "delusion (*moha*), the illusory notion of a separate self-hood; secondly, desire-attachment (*dvesa*), the craving for and clinging to all that serves to maintain the sense of ego; and thirdly, aversion (*râga*), the hatred of whatever opposes or threatens this sense" (Snodgrass 1985: 84). In iconography, the three levels of defilement of beings are represented respectively by a black pig, a red cock, and a green snake, occupying the navel of the Wheel (Figure 7.10.). As shown in Figure 7.9 above, the outer rim of the Wheel is divided into twelve sectors. These sectors are also chained together as a cycle, signifying the causal cycle of birth and death, called "the Twelve-Linked Chain of Dependent Origination (*pratîtya-samutpâda*)" (Evola 1951: 73f). In some cases, the circumference of the Wheel is composed of two rims, and each is divided into eighteen sectors, as shown in Figure 7.11., and these have the same significance. The malignant monster who gnaws the Wheel is the Judge of the Dead -- Yama -- who enforces the Law of Causation in the Wheel, ensuring that beings transmigrate into the right state of existence. In Buddhism, he is entitled the Lord of the Wheel of Existence.



Figure 7.10. Navel of the Wheel of Existence, occupied by a pig, a cock, and a snake (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 51)

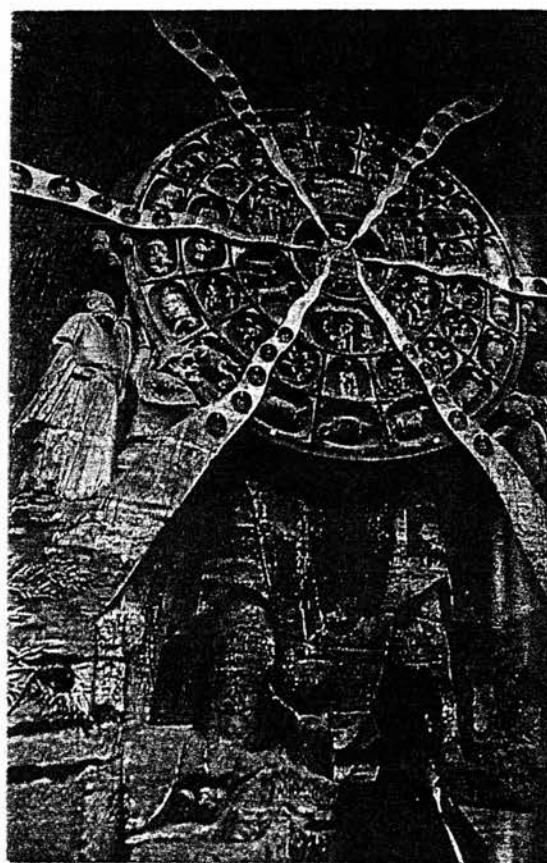


Figure 7.11. The Wheel of Existence, Ta-tsu cave temple, Szechwan province

To sum up, from the geometrical structure of the Wheel, we may picture the entire universe -- the felloe symbolises Earth; the hub, Heaven; and the spokes, the *axis mundi*, the channel that connects Heaven and Earth. In Buddhist connotation, the hub of the Wheel represents the Sun, the Centre, which is situated on top of the world axis (Mt. Meru); and its spokes symbolise both the eternal rays shining forth from the Sun in all directions and the spiritual path that reunites sentient beings with the Centre.

In Buddhism, much of the symbolism of the Wheel lies principally in the number of its spokes. In terms of spatio-temporal significance, the four-spoked Wheel symbolises the four cardinal directions and four seasons; the six-spoked Wheel, the four cardinal directions, zenith, and nadir; the eight-spoked Wheel, the eight spatial directions (four cardinal and four intermediate directions); the ten-spoked Wheel, the ten spatial directions (four cardinal, four intermediate, zenith, and nadir); the twelve-spoked Wheel, the twelve months of a year and the zodiac.

Moreover, in terms of Buddhist doctrine, the four-spoked Wheel represents the Four Noble Truths (*si-sheng ti, chatvâri-ârya-satyâni*); the eight-spoked Wheel, the Eight-fold Path (*pa-cheng-tao, ashtângika mârga*). In Buddhism, the Dharma that the Buddha preaches consists mainly of these two doctrines. The Wheel thus signifies the Wheel of the Dharma (*Dharma-cakra*). In Buddhist connotation, the rotation of the Wheel of the Dharma (*chuan fa-lun 轉法輪*) symbolises the preaching of the Dharma by the Buddha to save all sentient beings from suffering; and, by reference, is a symbol of the Buddha and the Dharma. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, the six-spoked Wheel represents the Wheel of Existence (*Samsâra-cakra*), within which the six states of existence (heavenly gods, human beings, Asuras, beasts, ghosts, and damned beings) transmigrate from one existence to another in an incessant sequence. In the Buddhists' view, this endless transmigration of beings is caused by defiled

minds suffering from delusion (*moha*), desire-attachment (*dvesa*), and aversion (*râga*).

On the whole, beings are suffering from the turning of the Wheel of Existence -- the continuous cycle of birth and death. The only way to cease the torment of the turning is to attain the state of *nirvâna*, the means to which lies in the rotation of the Wheel of the Dharma. In other words, once the turning of the Wheel of Existence comes to an end, the Wheel of the Dharma starts to revolve; and vice versa. In this view, these two Wheels are indivisible; they are in fact two faces of one single Truth. As Snodgrass (1985: 87) points out,

"The Wheel of the universe is of two-fold nature but single essence, ... its motion is at once a metaphysical and an existential turning."

7.3. THE LOTUS

Within the Chinese Buddhist temple, pedestals with lotus-petal mouldings -- *hsü-mi tso* (須彌座, "Sumeru Throne")¹⁷² (Figure 7.12.) -- can be found everywhere, either in large scale as the plinth of a pagoda or the platform of a pavilion hall, or small scale as the base of a column. Furthermore, the images of celestial deities -- Buddhas and Bodhisattvas -- are often manifested as seated upon or standing on a lotus throne, as shown in Figures 7.13. and 7.14. Apart from being a pedestal for architecture and statues, the lotus motif is also employed as the capital of column (Figure 7.15.), the nimbus of Buddhist images (Figure 7.16.), and the *plafond* under which Buddha images are worshipped (Figure 7.17.). Here, the Buddhist images are

¹⁷² The "Sumeru Throne" (*hsü-mi-tso*) was introduced by Buddhists from India and completely absorbed by the Chinese. In outer appearance, the *hsü-mi-tso* is a high pedestal with decorated mouldings. Initially these "thrones" were embossed with repetitive bands of waves and clouds as found in the Tun-huang caves; however later these were abandoned in favour of a lotus petal motif (Su Gindjih 1964: 210).

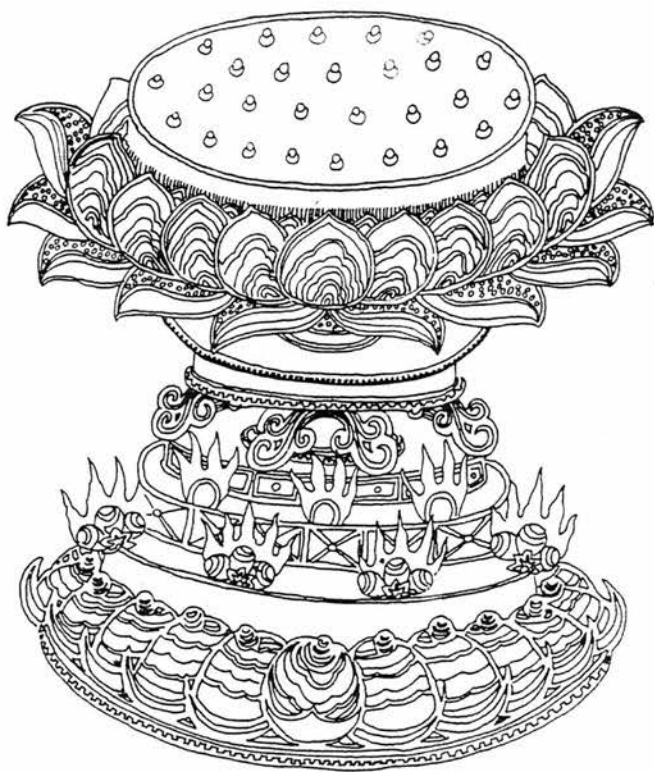


Figure 7.12. *Hsü-mi-tso*, "Sumeru Throne", no. 217 cave of Tun-huang cave temple (Yet and P'an 1989: 195)

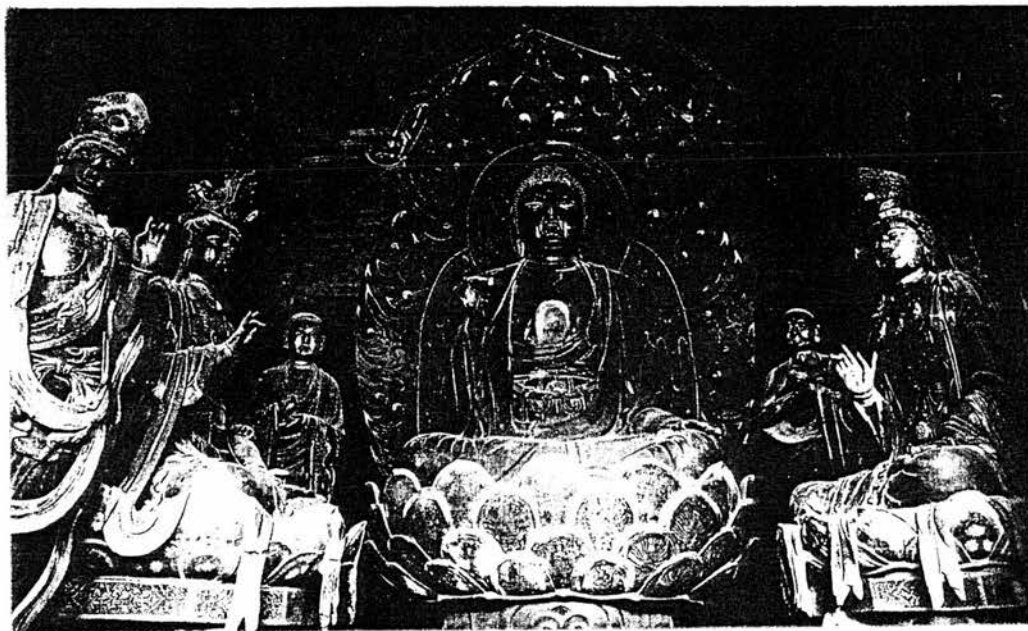


Figure 7.13. Buddhist image seated upon a lotus throne, Hsia-hua-yen-ssû, Shansi province (Fisher 1993: 116)



Figure 7.14. Buddhist images standing on lotus thrones (silk embroidery), no. 17 cave of Tun-huang cave temple (Fisher 1993: 109)

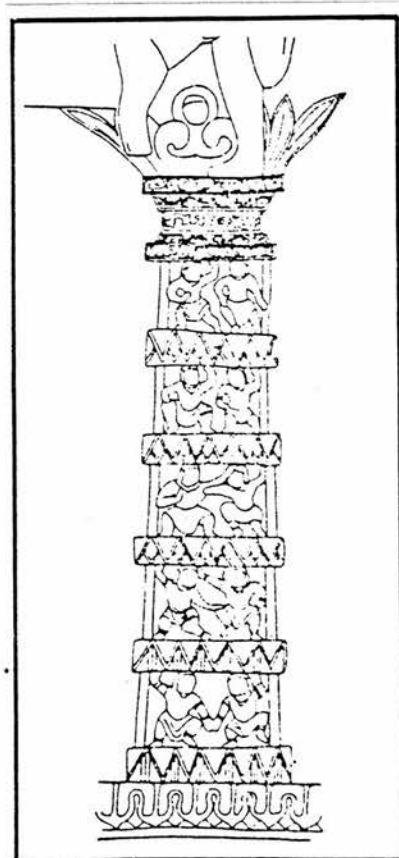


Figure 7.15. Lotus motif adorned as the capital of columns, Yün-kang cave temple (Chuang 1980: 79)

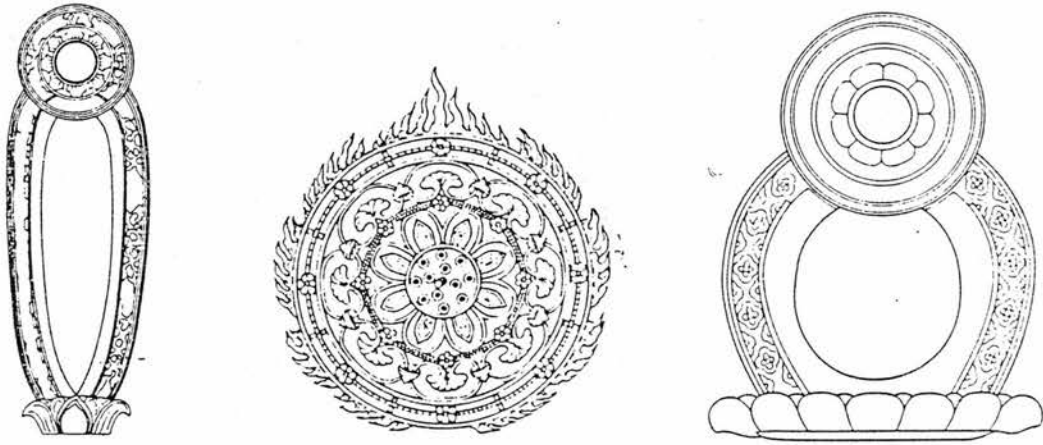


Figure 7.16. Examples of lotus nimbus of Buddhist images (Chuang 1980: 77)



Figure 7.17. Lotus plafond, Lung-men cave temple (Capon 1989: 65)

regarded as the *imago mundi*, the spiritual channel connecting Heaven and Earth (Snodgrass 1985: 99).

In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, these lotuses symbolise the cosmogenesis -- the One to the Many, the Principle to all manifestations (Coomaraswamy 1979: 17 ff & 39 ff). The symbolism originates from the traditional Indian belief that the Lotus bloomed at the time of the rising Sun -- the Dawn of cosmic creation -- and brought forth and grew the world. As revealed in *Pancavimsa Brâhmana* (XVIII. 8.6) "Shining in the lights of Heaven through the [Dawn], the lotus is brought to birth" (Ibid.: 20). The Dawn here, as declared in *Rg Veda* (X. 55.4), "brings forth the growth of growth (*pustasya pustam*)" (Ibid.: 71, n.40). Here, the lotus symbolises the source of the world. Moreover, in association with the belief in the cosmic Column which holds Heaven and Earth apart, the Lotus is also a symbolic supporter of the world (Snodgrass 1985: 98). The symbolism is testified to by the etymology of the Sanskrit word *puskara* (lotus), whose root *pus* means "to prop" and "to grow". In iconography, the symbolism is witnessed in the image of the God Sûrya, who is often portrayed as holding a lotus in either hand, as shown in Figure 7.18., and who is also seen as the prop of Heaven and Earth (Rao 1914: 1. 306).

In Buddhism, similarly to the spokes of the Wheel discussed above, the petals of the Lotus express the Buddhist metaphysical concept of space (Tucci 1961: 27). The Lotus petals represent not only space fanning out in all cardinal directions (Figure 7.19.), but also, in terms of the doctrine of *mandala*, the relative position of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist Kingdom (Cf. above Figure 2.21.). Thus, the four-petalled lotus signifies both the spaces of the four cardinal directions and the Buddhas who govern these four realms. The eight-petalled lotus symbolises both eight spatial directions (four cardinal and four intermediate directions) and the four Buddhas on the petals in the cardinal directions and the four Bodhisattvas on the petals in the

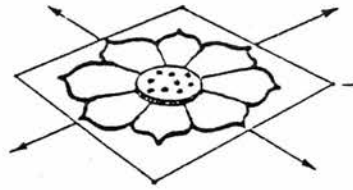


Figure 7.19. Conceptual diagram of the lotus (Snodgrass 1985: 97)



Figure 7.18. The Sun God Sūrya, holding a lotus in either hand (Snodgrass 1985: 98)

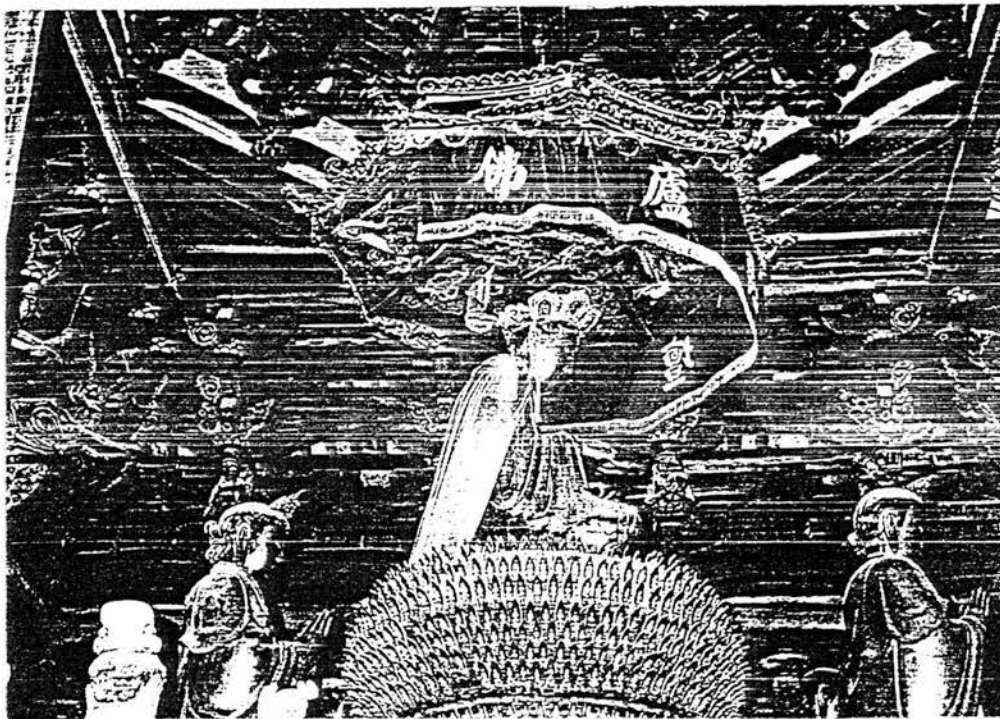


Figure 7.20. The Buddha Mahāvairocana, seating on a thousand-petalled lotus base, K'ai-yen-ssû, Ch'ien-chou (Wei 1981: II, 207)

diagonal directions. The idea behind the latter was discussed in 4.4., the "Womb-World Mandala" (Cf. above Figure 2.21.), wherein the Buddha Mahāvairocana, representing the Centre, is situated on the hub of the lotus (Snodgrass 1985: 100 & 206). The thirty-two-petalled Lotus represents both the thirty two spatial directions which radiate from the centre and the thirty two gods who inhabit Tao-li-t'ien (the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven), where the god Ti-shih (Indra) is the governor (*Majjhima Nikāya* I. 253).

As to the Thousand-petalled Lotus (*sahasrâra*), this Lotus signifies both the thousand spatial directions and the thousand Buddhas of the Buddhist kingdom. In Buddhist connotation, "thousand" is regarded metaphysically as meaning countlessness. In this context, the Lotus is considered as the midday Sun, which is located at the summit of Mt. Meru, and from which myriads of solar rays and Buddhist deities radiate out in all directions (Snodgrass 1985: 27).

In iconography, the portrait of the deity who symbolises the Sun, or Centre, often incorporates the Thousand-petalled Lotus. An instance of this is the Great Sun God Mahāvairocana of the Tantric school who is often portrayed as seated on a thousand-petalled lotus base, as shown in Figure 7.20. Another distinctive example of this is the representation of the Buddha Locana. The doctrinal basis of the solar symbolism of this deity lies in the teaching of the Lotus-Womb-World (*padma-garbha-lokadhātu*) of the Hua-yen school. As described in *Brahmajāla sūtra*, the Buddha Locana

"dwells on the lotus throne which contains the worlds and oceans. This throne is surrounded by one thousand petals. Each petal being a world, it makes one thousand worlds. I metamorphose myself producing one thousand Sâkyas, conforming to the one thousand worlds. Further, on each petal which is a world there are a hundred million Sumerus, a hundred million suns and moons, a hundred million worlds each in four parts, a hundred million Jambudvîpas, a hundred million Bodhisattva-Sâkyas, who are sitting under a hundred million *bodhi* trees, each of them preaching the qualities and stages of a *bodhisattva*

... Each Sâkya of the remaining nine hundred and ninety nine Sâkyas produces thousands and hundred of millions of Sâkyas, who do the same. The Buddhas on the thousand petals are transformations of myself, and the thousands and hundreds of millions of Sâkyas are the transformations of these thousand Sâkyas. I am their origin and my name is Locana Buddha" (Elisséeff 1936: 91).

Here, "Sâkya" refers to the Buddha Sâkyamuni, and is, by reference, a general term for Buddha. The Buddha Locana is here regarded as the Origin of all Buddhas, and the thousand petals symbolise both the thousand worlds and the Buddhas that were brought forth from the Centre of the Lotus, or the supreme Buddha Locana. Evidence of the symbolism is found in the Great Buddha Hall of the Japanese Tôdaiji temple in Nana where the Buddha on the central altar is portrayed seated on a lotus with innumerable petals, on each of which is carved an image of the Buddha Sâkyamuni (Figure 7.21.) (Okazaki 1977: 35).

The Lotus is regarded as the spiritual ground which nourishes the seed (*bîja*) of the Buddhahood -- the Womb of the Buddhahood (*tathâgata-garbha*)¹⁷³ from which all the Buddhas are brought forth into the world. This idea is promulgated by the Pure Land School: in the school's principal text, *Mahâ-sukhâvatî-vyûha* (16; Fujimoto 1955: I. 100), the Lotus is depicted as growing in the pond of the Pure Land, the "Land of Supreme Bliss" (*sukhâ-vatî*). From each Lotus,

"... there proceed thirty six hundred thousand *kotis* of rays of light. From each ray of light there proceed thirty six hundred thousand *kotis* of Buddhas, with bodies of golden-colour, possessed of the thirty two marks of great men, who go and teach the Law to beings in the immeasurable and innumerable worlds in the eastern quarter. Thus also in the southern western and northern quarters, above and below, in the cardinal and intermediate points, they go their way to the immeasurable and innumerable worlds and teach the Law to beings in the whole world." (Snodgrass 1985: 204)

Thus, myriads of Buddhas were born into the immeasurable and innumerable worlds from the Lotus, and preach the Dharma to all beings.

¹⁷³ Here, the Sanskrit word *tathâgata* (literally meaning "thus come") refers to the eternal Dharma Body of the Buddha (*dharma-kâya*), or the Suchness (*tathatâ*).



Figure 7.21. Thousand-petalled lotus base, the Great Buddha Hall, Tōdaiji, Japan
(Lai 1986: 79)

As far as the doctrine of Ultimate Return is concerned, the Lotus is regarded as the final destination of the spiritual journey of the devotee. As revealed in *Mahâ-sukhâvatî-vyûha* (41), when a Pure Land devotee embarks on his spiritual journey -- uttering the name of the Amitâbha Buddha -- he is regarded as having been reborn in the seeds of the Lotus in the ponds of the Pure Land. At the end of the journey which is represented by the flowering of the lotus, he is considered as having perceived the Buddha and been reborn in the Pure Land.

In the connotation of the Ch'an school, the Womb of the Buddhahood is regarded as the Buddha Nature, dwelling innately within the innermost Centre of beings (Suzuki 1930: 85; Cook 1977: 44-5); this Nature is obscured by the ignorance or false judgements of beings. As indicated in the principal text of the Meditation school *Lankâvatâra sûtra* (77),

"... The *tathâgata-garbha*.... is by nature bright and pure, unspotted, endowed with the thirty two marks of excellence, hidden in the body of every being like a gem of great value, which is wrapped in a dirty garment, enveloped in the garment of the *skandhas*, the *dhâtus* and *âyatanas*, and soiled with the dirt of greed, anger, folly and false imagination..." (Suzuki 1932: 68f).

The aim of the Ch'an school is to awaken this Buddha Nature. The identification of the Lotus, or the Womb of the Buddhahood, with the inner Buddha Nature is also strengthened by the characteristic purity of the Lotus -- being nourished in the dirty mud, yet growing undefiled. As revealed in *Samyutta Nikâya* (III. 140),

"Just as, Brethren, a lotus, born in the water, even so, Brethren, the Tathâgata, born in the world, surpasses the world and is unaffected by the world" (Snodgrass 1985: 204).

That is to say, within the Lotus, or the Womb, all manifestations are in their undefiled condition (*Asvaghosa* 36), as is the Buddha Nature in the inner recesses of beings.

In the Sangha or Buddhist Brotherhood, the purity of the lotus is often employed to indicate the spiritual quality that a monk should aspire to. To quote the *Milinda Panho* (VII / 2-4; Ward 1952: 137 f),

"As the lotus grows in the water but is undefiled by the water, so [the monk] should be undefiled by the support he receives, by his following of disciples, by fame, honour, veneration or an abundance of requisites; as the lotus remains lifted in the air, so [the monk] should remain far above worldly things; and again, as the lotus trembles in the breeze, so [the monk] should exercise self-control in respect of the least evil dispositions."

To sum up, within the temple premises, the lotus, in most cases, serves as an ornamental pedestal. In Buddhist terminology, a pedestal with lotus-petal moulding is called a "Sumeru Throne", *hsü-mi-tso*, whether it is an architectural column or a Buddhist image that is resting upon it. In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the lotus symbolises the origin of the world, the Centre or the Sun, from which space is radiated out in all cardinal directions and Buddhist deities were brought forth into the supermundane Buddhist Kingdom. The symbolism extends to the petals of the lotus as well as the lotus itself. The lotus petals, which are always even in number and range from four to thousands, represent the equivalent number of spatial directions and Buddhist deities. For instance, the deity who represents the source of thousands of Buddhist deities is often portrayed sitting on a thousand-petalled lotus throne.

Being the progenitive Centre, the lotus as a whole is considered the spiritual ground which nourishes the seed (*bîja*) of the Buddhahood, and symbolises the Womb of the Buddhahood (*tathâgata-garbha*), from which all Buddhas were brought forth into the world. As interpreted by the Pure Land school, this seed of the Buddhahood is represented by the lotus seeds which grow in the ponds of the Pure Land. According to the Meditation school, the seed of the Buddhahood is the Buddha Nature (*buddhatâ*) which is innate in the Centre of all beings. Like the pure lotus

which blooms in muddy ponds, the seed of this Nature can grow and blossom into the Buddhahood. This can be achieved either by uttering the name of the Amitâbha Buddha (as advocated by the Pure Land school), or by the intuitive technique preached by the Meditation school (See above 2.5.1. and 2.5.2.).

7.4. THE IMAGES

7.4.1. The trinity

Located on the central longitudinal axis, the Great Buddha Hall, as has been explored in 5.4.4., is the spiritual and architectural climax of the temple, and on its central altar, the Buddha trio is enshrined. In fact, the idea of the trinity was well established even before Buddhism flourished in India. According to traditional Indian beliefs, when the universe sprang into existence it manifested itself in three ways, but these three ways were never represented as deities. In the course of time, this traditional idea was appropriated by the Buddhists and redefined as the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*san-pao* 三寶), the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and it became synonymous with the Buddha Sâkyamuni himself and the essence of Buddhist teaching (Reichelt 1934: 182). It became fundamental to Buddhist dogmas and implanted into the rituals and everyday life of Buddhist society. Consequently, many Buddhist notions are based on the belief in a trinity (Table. 7.1.); and the sacred phrases: "*kuei-i fo, kuei-i fa, kuei-i seng*" (皈依佛, 皈依法, 皈依僧), or "I dedicate myself to the Buddha, to the Dharma, to the Sangha", is repeated again and again throughout the rite of ordination and during daily worship.

A comparison of the Buddhist trinity and the traditional Chinese belief mentioned in 2.3.1., reveals certain similarities between them. According to traditional

Table 7.1. Synoptical scheme of the Triratna, Trikâya and Trailokya
(Eitel 1970: 180)

Buddha	Sangha	Dharma
Practical Bodhi	Reflected Bodhi	Essential Bodhi
Sâkyamuni	Loshana	Vairocana
Manuchi Buddha	Dhyâni Bodhisattva	Dhyâni Buddha
Nirmanakâya	Sambhogakâya	Dharmakâya
Transformations	Completeness	Purity
First and second Buddha-kchêtra	Third Buddha-kchêtra	Fourth Buddha-kchêtra
Kâmadhâtu	Rûpadhâtu	Ârûpadhâtu

Chinese beliefs, in the great trinity -- "Heaven, Earth, and Man" (*t'ien-ti-jen* 天 地 人) -- Heaven represents the Essence, Earth, the Substance, and Man, the "ten-thousand things", or the "Totality of Manifestation" (Guénon 1957: 82f), while with the Three Jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhism, the Buddha corresponds to the active component of the triad, the Essence, the Dharma is the supporting substratum, the Substance, and the Sangha represents humanity and, by extension, the cosmos, or the "Totality of Manifestation" (Snodgrass 1985: 219). As regards the supernatural origin from which the universe was produced, there is a similar concept in Taoism called *tao* (道). According to *Tao-te ching*, the belief of *tao* is interpreted as the combination of the perceivable *tao* which can be named as the real and the undefinable *tao* which lies behind existence and cannot be named; together they produce the cosmos.

With the increase of Buddhist iconic worship in China, each of these "Three Jewels" acquired a resplendent iconic representation. Originally, in this context, the Buddha Sâkyamuni would usually be set in the centre as the representative of the Buddha (*fo*).¹⁷⁴ The Dharma (*Fa*) is represented by the Buddha Vairocana; and the Sangha (*seng*), by the Buddha Loshana. Here, the Buddha Sâkyamuni (Shih-chia-mou-ni 釋迦牟尼), the "Wise One of the Sâkya Family", is the name by which the Chinese refer to the Gautama Buddha, the Origin of Buddhism. A monk who was not sure about a certain dogma would ask if this is what the Gautama Buddha meant. In Buddhism, therefore, his image is erected as a representation of the first of the Three Jewels.

¹⁷⁴ The reason why the Gautama Buddha was, initially, always the central figure in the trinity, instead of the other Buddhas such as Maitrêya or Amitâbha, who, later, in the T'ang dynasty surpassed Sakyâmuni as popular figures among the majority of Chinese Buddhist devotees (Prip-moller 1937: 27-8 and Meyer 1992: 81) lies in the fact that at the outset it was the Mahâyâna school which dominated the belief of the Chinese Buddhist world. Mahâyâna sees him as having transcended spiritually into a supremely powerful divine being, a God (Reichelt 1934: 35). In other words, in the Mahâyâna sutras, the Buddha is portrayed in terms of his metaphysical characteristics rather than as a purely physical human form as advocated by the Hinayâna.

In iconography, he is normally portrayed sitting on a lotus-blossom in meditation. Frequently, sitting in this pose, an old religious symbol of cosmic union -- 卐 (*wan-tsu* 萬字, *swastika*), will be found engraved on his breast as the heart's signet (*hsin-yin* 心印), as shown in Figure 7.22., symbolising the sign of "A Heart Come To Rest" (Reichelt 1934: 161). Apart from the usual seated images, you may also occasionally find the Buddha portrayed lying on bed, the so-called *wo-fo* (臥佛, "Lying Buddha"), as shown in Figure 7.23., symbolising the achievement of the state of the final Enlightenment. In terms of the incarnation (*nirmanakaya*), the Buddha is sometimes portrayed as a little child which alludes to the Buddha's comment: "I am now born for the last time." (Ibid.: 162) Furthermore, within every detail of the figure including his face, hands, body, and legs, much of the deepest mysticism of the Buddhist faith is portrayed.¹⁷⁵ The attentive Buddhist, who has studied the inner life of Buddhism, will seek to trace his way through these characteristic features to a deeper comprehension of the Buddha's concepts.

As to the other two Buddha of the trinity -- the Buddha Vairocana, (P'i-lu-chê-na 毘盧遮那), and the Buddha Loshana (Lu-shê-na 盧舍那), the former represents Buddhist doctrine, or the Dharma, and the latter represents Buddhist society, or the Sangha. Because of the role of the Buddha Vairocana as representative of the Buddhist law, he is known in China as the Great *Fa-shih* (法師, "Interpreter of the Law").¹⁷⁶ Moreover, in terms of the Womb-World Mandala (*garbhadhātu*), the Buddha Vairocana, his name literally meaning "all illuminating", is honoured as the Great Brilliant One (see above 2.5.5.), and is adopted by the Tantric school, or Mi-tsung, as the personification of essential body and absolute purity (Eitel 1970: 192).¹⁷⁷ Figure

¹⁷⁵ The symbolism of the Three Jewels, which is highly metaphorical, is not easy to understand except for advanced Buddhists.

¹⁷⁶ The religious meaning of this title was revealed in the *Miao-fa lien-hua ching*, "Lotus sutra", or *Saddharma-pundarika sūtra*.

¹⁷⁷ The sutra basis of the Vairocana cult in Tantrism is the *Ta-jih ching* (大日經, "Great Sun Sutra"), or *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra*.



Figure 7.22. *Wan-tsu*, found engraved on the breast of the Buddha, Chin-shan-ssû, Kiangsu province (Chuang 1981: I, 105)

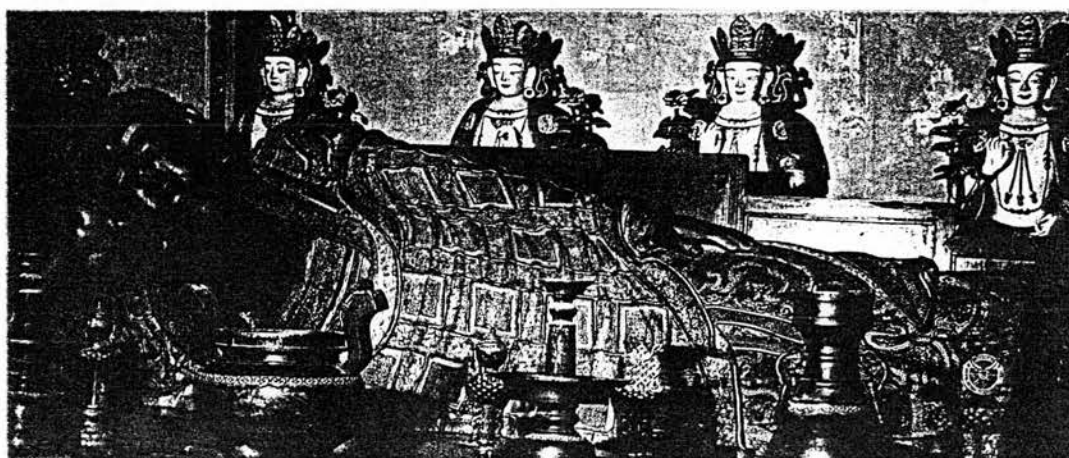


Figure 7.23. *Wo-fo*, "Lying Buddha", Wo-fo-ssû, Peking (Chuang 1981: I, 13)

7.24. shows a colossal image of him, which was found carved on the wall of a Longmen cave.

In course of time, when Chinese Buddhism began to flourish, the images by which the trinity group were represented tended to vary (Prip-moller 1937: 48). In most extant cases, the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall (Figure 7.25.) is occupied by the Buddha Sakyâmuni with the Buddha Amitâbha to the right and the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru to the left (Reichelt 1934: 183 and Meyer 1992: 80). With regards to the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the Gautama Buddha symbolises the ultimate Buddha; the Buddha Amitâbha, the Dharma; and the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru, the Sangha. As far as cosmic time (*kalpa*) is concerned, these three represent the Past, the Present and the Future respectively. The central one, the Gautama Buddha, is seen as the Lord of the Present *so-p'o shih-chieh* (娑 婆 世 界, "World of Sorrow"); on his right hand, the Buddha Amitâbha, is King of the Western Paradise, the Future Kingdom of God; and on his left, the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru, is King of the Eastern Paradise, the Past Kingdom of God (Reichelt 1934: 183-4).¹⁷⁸

As indicated in *Fo-shuo wu-liang ching-ching p'ing-teng chüeh-ching* (佛 說 無 量 清 淨 平 等 覺 經) (TSD 25), the Buddha Amitâbha, O-mi-t'o-fo in Chinese, is defined as the ethereal form of the Gautama Buddha and, as revealed in *Wu-liang-shou ching* (無 量 壽 經) (TSD 27), he vows to establish a kingdom of perfect blessedness to save all sentient beings before attaining the state of Buddha (Figure 7.26.) (Prip-moller 1937: 40). He is also appointed by the Gautama Buddha to be ruler of the

¹⁷⁸ Most Buddhist temples in China have a southern exposure which automatically places the east on the left hand side of the central Buddha, and the west on the right. However, the "east" and the "west" here, symbolising the Eastern and the Western Paradise respectively, must not be taken literally as meaning the actual geographical aspect of the hall. The images of the left and right hand sides of the central Buddha may be interchanged in response to the symbolism of the images. In view of this, if the position of the trinity group changes from the front to the rear of the altar, i.e. the altar facing north, the side figures will keep their positions in relation to the east and west of the hall but interchange it in relation to the central figure (Prip-moller 1937: 206).



Figure 7.24. Colossal image of the Buddha Vairocana, Lung-men cave temple (Chuang 1981: I, 65)



Figure 7.25. The Buddha trinity, the Great Buddha Hall, Hua-t'ing-ssû, K'un-ming (Chuang 1981: II, 28)



Figure 7.26. Prayer-sheet with illustration of Amitābha Buddha, Tun-huang cave temple (Wood 1985: 15)

Western Paradise. In the Buddhist world, he is honoured as the Chieh-yin-fo (接引佛), the "Buddha who Receives and Leads Sentient Beings into the Western Paradise" (Reichelt 1934: 162).

As to the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru, the symbolism of this deity is in keeping with his Chinese name: Yao-shih-fo (藥師佛, "Master of Medicine"). Clearly, under this title, his role as saviour of the world is based on the power of *yao* (藥, "medicine"), and the healing of physical as well as spiritual illnesses. His commitment to being a healer is witnessed in *Fo-shuo ta-kuan-ting shen-chou ching* (佛說大觀頂神咒經) (TSD 167) in which he took twelve vows to free sentient beings not only from bodily pain but also from the pain of soul and mind. Moreover, as stated in *Yao-shih ching* (藥師經, "Sutra of the Master of Medicine"), he lives in endless light, and thereby represents the great source of light; and will draw all creation out of illusion and the darkness of despair into light and peace (Reichelt 1934: 163).¹⁷⁹

Increasingly, as Buddhism developed in China, we find that *bodhisattvas* also form part of the trinity within temple premises. In the case of the Pure Land school temple, there is a combination of the trinity group, consisting of the Buddha Amitâbha, the ruler of the Western Pure Land, who stands in the centre, with the Bodhisattva Avalôkitêsvara to his left and Mahâasthanaparapta to his right (Figure 7.27.).¹⁸⁰ Regarding belief in the Western Paradise, the symbolism of this group is

¹⁷⁹ In terms of the characteristic of great compassion expressed in the desire to save the world, it seems that there is an overlap in the spheres of the sacred activities of the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru with the Gautama and Amitâbha Buddha mentioned above. However, the truth is that these three Buddhas -- the trinity -- in a sense, are all really one, merely giving expression to the different ideas and shades of meaning in the great harmonious whole.

¹⁸⁰ The Bodhisattvas, having escaped from the law of metempsychosis (See above 5.2.), are therefore entitled to be glorified with the Buddhas in the Great Buddha Hall. In the Chinese Buddhist temple, apart from the Bodhisattvas Avalôkitêsvara and Mahâasthanaparapta, the famous ones, such as the Bodhisattva Maitreya, Manjusri, and Samantabhadra, were often included in the trinity group worshipped on the central altar. Of course, besides these five best-known Bodhisattvas, there are countless *bodhisattvas*, named and unnamed, whose existence can be attested by the famous Buddhist phrase, *nan-mo ch'ing-ching ta-hai chung-p'u-sa* (南無清淨大海眾菩薩, "Hail, ye pure and peaceful bodhisattvas round about in the great ocean"). (Reichelt 1934: 182)

Bodhisattva
Mahāhasthanaprapta

Buddha
Amitābha

Bodhisattva
Avalôkitêsvara



Figure 7.27. *Hsi-fang-san-sheng*, "Three Holy Ones from the West"
(Reichelt 1934: 130)

attested to by its Chinese title: *Hsi-fang san-sheng* (西方三聖, "Three Holy Ones from the West").

In Buddhism, the Bodhisattva Avalôkitêsvara (Kuan-yin 觀音) is a symbol of mercy and compassion. "She" listens to cries of misery and cares for suffering beings. In the early days of the spread of the cult, the Bodhisattva Avalôkitêsvara was generally considered to be male, and portrayed normally as an powerful figure with beard and virile expression. In this form, the Bodhisattva is seen as the son of the Buddha Amitâbha. In course of time, the Chinese Buddhists associated the idea of the Bodhisattva's being a symbol of mercy and compassion with motherly tenderness and womanly grace, and feminine characteristics became more prominent in depictions.

According to *Miao-fa lien-hua ching* ("Lotus sūtra"), or the *Saddharma-pundarika sūtra*, (XXV), Avalôkitêsvara defeats all evil spirits and grants deliverance; her wondrous knowledge can save the world from sorrow; and her mercy upon mercy is like the purest light kindling the desire for a renewal of heart among all creatures, and protecting them against all pain and sorrow (Reichelt 1934: 166-7). By the late T'ang dynasty, the Bodhisattva had become an important figure among the Chinese Buddhist pantheon and occupied the central space of the altar (Fisher 1993: 106). In iconography, the Bodhisattva is usually depicted carrying a bottle containing *kan-lu* (甘露, "Sweet Dew"), the symbol of purity, and a willow branch with which to sprinkle it, symbolising the purification from sin of suffering beings (Prip-moller 1937: 49). Furthermore, her significance is also illustrated in her Chinese title: *Ta-tsu ta-pei Kuan-yin* (大慈大悲觀音, "Goddess of Great Mercy and Compassion"), as illustrated in Figure 7.28.

Emphasising the significance of her great mercy and compassion, the Bodhisattva is seen more as a saviour than just a deity and often displays her



Figure 7.28. A command with an illustration of Kuan-yin (Rudova 1988: 23)

supernatural powers by incarnating herself in a variety of forms in order to save those in a variety of perils, from fire to robbery and shipwreck, and even to aid those seeking children.¹⁸¹ She can manifest herself as one of the worst class of beings, a robber or a criminal in prison, for it is her very nature that she can meet the sinner at the moment of crisis or in the greatest darkness. For those women who are suffering from sterility, the Bodhisattva is incarnated as *Sung-tsu niang-niang* (送子娘娘 "Virgin who Gives Fecundity") and normally represented with children in her arms and surrounded by children (Prip-moller 1937: 52).

She is also constantly shown in association with fish and the sea. For example, she was sometimes portrayed by T'ang painters with a fish in her hand, or standing on the head of a sea monster accompanied by her two acolytes -- the monk Shan-ts'ai (善才) and Lung-nü (龍女, "Daughter of the Dragon King"). Thus, she is regarded as the patron goddess and protector of the fishermen on P'u-t'o (普陀) island in the Ning-po (寧波) archipelago (Prip-moller 1937: 48). Furthermore, having been said to have risen from the *Nan-hai* (南海, "Southern Sea"), the Bodhisattva is honoured as *Nan-hai chun-t'i* (南海準提, "Goddess of the Southern Sea"), and is portrayed as a rather grotesque figure with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes.¹⁸² Figure 7.29. shows an example of this monstrous image. In the Chinese Buddhist world, she is fêted on the nineteenth of the second, sixth and ninth months of each year, dates which mark the three most important periods of her life: her birth, Enlightenment and death (Reichelt 1934: 166).

The Bodhisattva Mahahasthanaparapta (Ta-shih-chih 大勢至) is worshipped as the second son of the Buddha Amitâbha, and portrayed in the Pure Land temple

¹⁸¹ The total number of these forms, the so called *ying* 應 in Chinese, is, as we know from the Buddhist sutras and legends, thirty two.

¹⁸² The legend, according to Reichelt (1934: 169), is connected with the Taoist goddess, *hsi-wang-mu* (西王母, "King's Mother of the Western Kingdom"), or with the Buddha's mother, Mo-yeh.

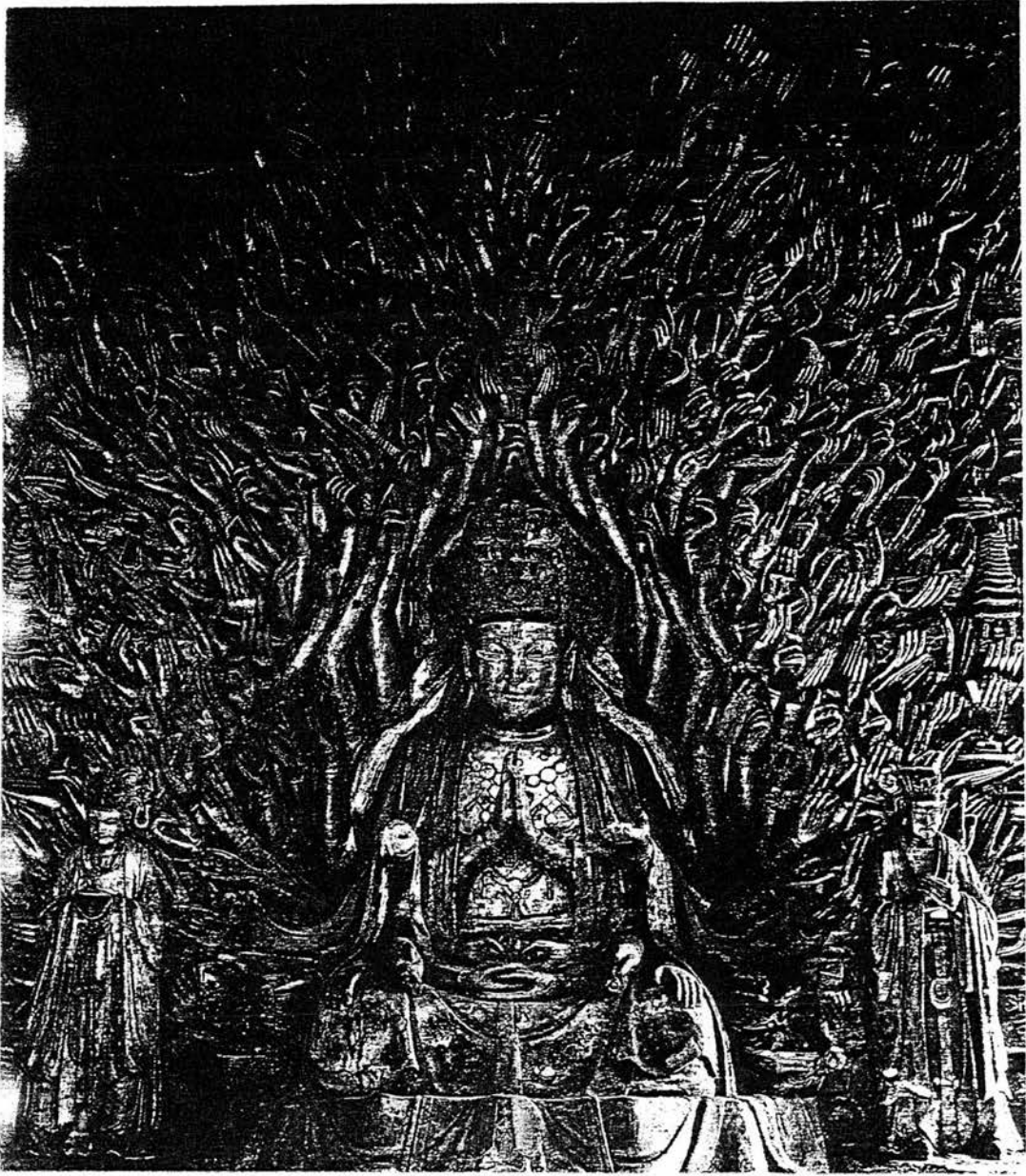


Figure 7.29. Image of Kuan-yin, portrayed with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes, no. 85 cave of Ta-tsu cave temple (Chuang 1981: II, 174)

holding a lotus flower in his hand (Prip-moller 1937: 48-9). The honour which he is accorded is due to his power of providing an atonement which makes it possible for mankind to break loose from the "Cycle of Soul Wanderings", or the "Law of *Karmic Retribution*". In Buddhism, he is thus honoured as the strongest one, or "the one who, in power, has attained the highest" (Reichelt 1934: 171). The power of love is his most important attribute, his heart of boundless compassion, to which access is gained simply by having faith in him.

Later, because of the rise of the Maitrêya cult, we often find that the Bodhisattva Mahahasthanaparapta, or even the central figure of the altar, has been replaced by the statue of the Bodhisattva Maitrêya (Fisher 1993: 100). Being a *bodhisattva*, he has delayed his own access to Buddhahood, and acts as a tutelary god under the name Aditja, a name which symbolises charity. The reason for his being placed in the centre of the altar is that, in Buddhism, he is also honoured as the "Buddha of the Coming Ages".

According to the *Mi-lo hsia-sheng ching* (彌勒下生經, "Sutra of the Descent of the Maitrêya"), or the *Mitrêya-vyâkarana sūtra*, (TSD 14. 453-7), the Gautama Buddha visited him in Tusita Heaven, the fourth level of the Devaloka,¹⁸³ and appointed him as the great saviour and renewer in the *mo-fa* (末法), or the coming ages when people on earth have almost forgotten the faith, the power of evil is at its height, and all living things seem to be heading for ruin through sin and punishment

¹⁸³ As has been explored above in 5.2., before the achievement of the state of Buddhahood, the Bodhisattva has to reside in the Tusita Heaven; and the era in which the Bodhisattva completes his spell in that Heaven is correspondent to that of the appearance of a Buddha. Here, the Bodhisattva Maitrêya is the best example of the belief. According to the *Kuan Mi-lo p'u-sa shang-sheng tou-shuai t'ien-ching* (觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經) (TSD 14. 452), the sutra paints a clear picture of the belief of the Maitrêya being reborn in the Tusita heaven. For a description of the Tusita Heaven, see *Tao-hsing pan-jo po-lo-mi ching* (道行般若波羅蜜經, *Dasasâhasrikâ-prajñâpâramitâ sūtra*) in TSD 8. 224, and *Fang-kuang pan-lo ching* (放光般若經, *Pancavimsatisahasrika-prajñâpâramitâ sūtra*) in TSD 8. 221.

(Ho 1992: 118; Prip-moller 1937: 25).¹⁸⁴ Therefore, he is esteemed as a "Buddha" from the Tusita Heaven, or the "Heaven of the Blissful Gods" whose role is to restore human faith and establish the great millennial kingdom (Reichelt 1934: 172) The idea of his being the Messiah of Buddhism, the Buddha who will control the propagation of the faith in ages to come is inherent in his Chinese title: *Tang-lai Mi-lo-fo* (當來彌勒佛, "Mi-lo-fo who is to Come"). In course of time, according to the Buddhist biography *Kao-seng chuan* (TSD 50. 353b.27-c.8), rebirth in the Tusita Heaven became the ultimate goal of the Maitrêya cult's spiritual path, another strong reason why images of Maitrêya were worshipped in the Great Buddha Hall.¹⁸⁵

As far as iconography is concerned, the seated posture of the Maitrêya with his elbow resting on top of his crossed leg and his finger held to his cheek symbolises his sojourn in Tusita Heaven contemplating the future, as shown in Figure 7.30., while the standing posture represents his role as the future Buddha and the Gautama Buddha's officer (Prip-moller 1937: 26). Moreover, in honour of his ability to ascend to the higher Tusita Heaven, his icon, as noted by Fa-hsien in *Fo-kuo chi* (4-5), is characterised by its gigantic size. An example of this is the Mi-lo-fo, part of Ta-fo-ssû (大佛寺), as shown in Figure 7.31., which is carved into the side of a mountain. Within the hall, his image is normally three times as big as that of an *arhat*.

According to *Sung kao-seng chuan* (宋高僧傳, "Biographies of eminent monks compiled in the Sung"), (21. 21a), the Sung monk Pu-tai (布袋, "Hemp Sack"), who lived in the tenth century, with his smiling, pot-bellied image (see Figure 7.32.), is seen as an incarnation (*nirmanakaya*) of Maitrêya. While the Great Buddha Hall was normally the suitable place for him in his original state as the Buddha of the

¹⁸⁴ In terms of Buddhist cosmology, the *mo-fa* corresponds to the third *mahâkalpa* when the world is in a state of destruction (See above 2.4.2. and Reichelt 1934: 75-6).

¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the belief that the future Buddha Maitrêya will descend from the Tusita Heaven to save the world has become a source of strength to the Buddhist faith. Therefore, the worship of his image can also be found all over the temple.



Figure 7.30. Bodhisattva Maitrêya, votive stele, A.D. 551 (Fisher 1993: 119)

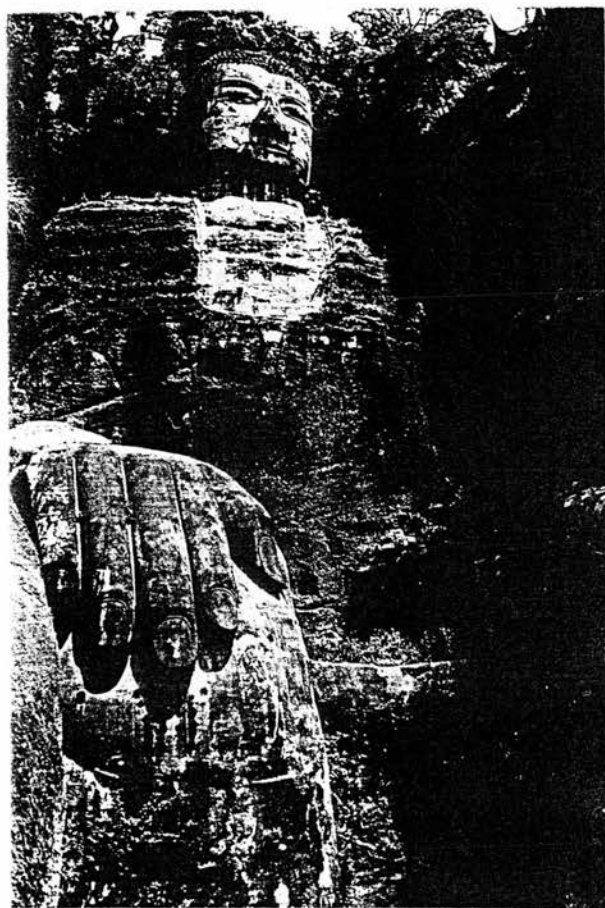


Figure 7.31. Colossal image of Maitrêya, Ta-fo-ssû, Szechwan province (Chuang 1981: II, 23)



Figure 7.32. Sung monk Pu-tai, incarnation of Maitrêya, depicted in the cave of Fei-lai Peak, near Ling-yin-ssû, Hang-chou (Lee 1983: 265)

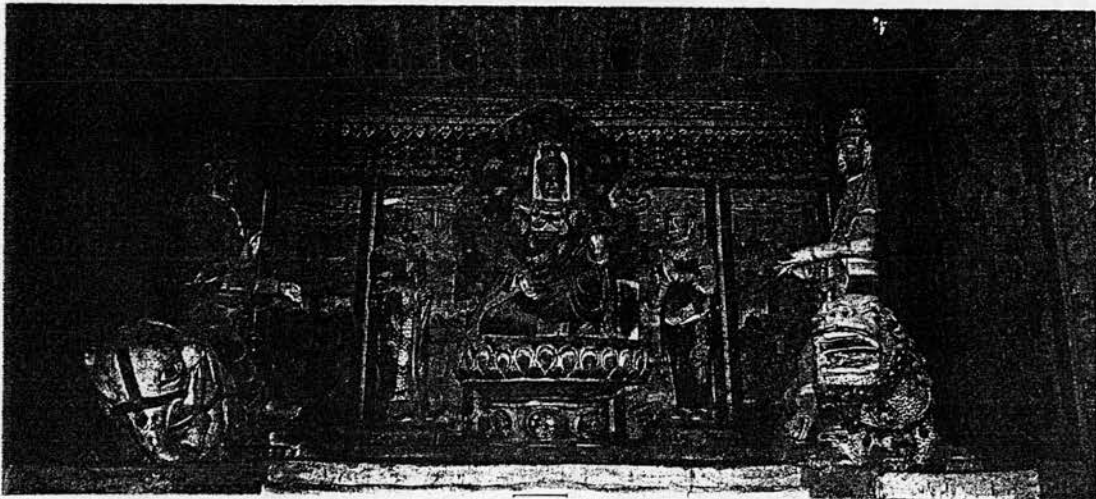


Figure 7.33. The Trinity -- the Buddha in the centre with Bodhisattvas Manjusri and Samantabhadra to his left and right (Lee 1983: 74)

Future or as a *bodhisattva*, his new image -- the "Body of Change" (*hua-shen*) -- would place him below the ranks of the Buddha and *bodhisattva* and he would therefore be seen in the Heavenly Kings' Hall (*t'ien-wang-tien*) as well (Prip-moller 1937: 30). Not that his position in the hall means he is in any way related to the guardian kings.

Apart from the arrangements of the trinity group in the Pure Land School temple mentioned above, we may sometimes find the Buddha placed as the central figure with the Bodhisattvas Manjusri and Samantabhadra to his left and right (Figure 7.33.). The Bodhisattva Manjusri (Wen-shu 文殊) symbolises transcendent wisdom and the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, (Pu-hsien 普賢), universal kindness, or mercy. In this context, the scenario of the belief, as Reichelt (1934: 186) describes, will be as follows:

"The heavenly Buddha looks down upon this 'world of sorrow', full of wisdom and grace, in which Wen-shu represents wisdom and Pu-hsien represents grace."

Within Chinese Buddhist world, these two Bodhisattvas are referred to mostly in terms of their characterisations in Buddhist literature. For example, according to the *Sung kao-seng chuan*, "Biographies of eminent monks compiled in the Sung", (21. 535, 541), they can be recognised by their outward appearances and their sacred abodes: Manjusri rides on a lion, and Samantabhadra on an elephant; the former inhabits the Wu-t'ai-shan (五台山) in Shansi province, and the latter O-mei-shan (峨眉山) in Szechwan province (Reichelt 1934: 173 and Ho 1992: 88, 91).

Occasionally, *arhats* are found as members of the trinity. In this case, they are normally placed to either side of the central Buddha. In China, the *arhat* is also interpreted as *ari-hat*, the word it derives from, meaning destroyer of the "enemy". In Buddhism, the enemy can refer to selfhood or the bond of *karmic* retribution. Therefore, under this interpretation, *arhat* can either mean conquerer of all passions, or

he who is exempt from transmigration (Eitel 1970: 16). Being a hero of the spirit, in the course of time, the *arhat*, combining with the Chinese conception of the saint, or *hsien* (賢, "Worthy"), is interpreted as a holy spirit or an immortal, *hsien* (仙).¹⁸⁶ This interpretation is exemplified in an essay in *Lu-shan chih* (廬山志, "Biography of Lu-shan"), written by the poet Lu You (陸游, A.D. 1125-1210), (12. 17b), which relates that

"in the temple of Hui Yüan (慧遠), in the *Shen-lien-tien* (神蓮殿), there are images of eighteen men who are called the 'Eighteen Worthies',¹⁸⁷ *hsien*, or the 'Pure Ones', *tung-tzu* (童子), and several of these worthies were found in the neighbouring Tung-lin-ssû (東林寺)." (Prip-moller 1937: 44)

In contrast with the compassionate *bodhisattvas* who always shared their accumulated *karma* with others, the *arhats* instead keep their *karma* to themselves. In Buddhism, the *arhat* represents a model of the Hinayâna concept of individual effort and striving towards Enlightenment (See above 2.2.3). In iconography, the *arhat* was usually portrayed as an individual with humble dress and a focused gaze indicating his

¹⁸⁶ In many literatures, this amalgamation is held responsible for the gradual lowering of the "standing" of the *lo-han* belief in Chinese Buddhism; the group was therefore no longer considered suitable company for the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Great Buddha Hall and was consequently moved to the Wu-pai lo-han t'ang (五百羅漢堂, "Five Hundred Arhat Hall"), of the lateral group of the temple (Prip-moller 1937: 110). However, in the eyes of the Chinese, the holy spirit, *hsien*, still possessed a great power and played an important role in their lives. Therefore, it seems inappropriate to say that the amalgamation is the only reason for the loss of standing of the *arhats*. We can only surmise that the fading of the *arhat* belief was possibly due to the gradual growth of Mahâyâna belief in China.

¹⁸⁷ Normally, the *arhat* images of the Great Buddha Hall are gathered in a group of eighteen. In China, the *Fo-tsu tung-chi* (佛祖統紀) (TSD 1661), is the first book that mentions the worship of the eighteen *arhats* in the hall (Prip-moller 1937: 44). For details of the names of the eighteen *arhats*, see Reichelt (1934: 175). As to the figure -- five hundred -- found in the nomenclature of the *arhat* hall of the lateral group, the idea of gathering five hundred *arhats* in a hall originated from the depiction of the assemblies of five hundred *arhats* attending councils, which took place in India in the centuries after the death of the Buddha Sakyâmuni, at which Buddhist theology was discussed. The figure "five hundred" was employed to describe the great number of disciples present at the conference, rather than being a precise record. In relation to the assembly of the *arhat* in the holy field, the *arhat* hall of the lateral group is also called *T'ien-tzu-t'ang* (田字堂), a name derived from the similarity between the profile of the plan and a Chinese character, *t'ien* (田, a field) (Prip-moller 1937: 110), signifying the holy field as a "state within the state". The same figure is also used in the pilgrimage reports of Chinese monks. For example, Fa-hsien who went to India in about A.D. 400, Sung-yün in A.D. 518, and Hsüan-tsang in the seventh century, all noted that five hundred or many *arhats* dwelt in caves or were seen wandering about (Prip-moller 1937: 107). Here, the *arhats*, being described as inhabitants of mountains and secluded caves, ties in with the characteristics of the *arhat* mentioned above -- they are self-contented persons who do not trouble themselves over the needs of others.

profound spiritual attainment, as shown in Figure 7.34. As mentioned in 4.2, the devotee, once having attained the state of *arhat*, ceases transmigrating. Since this is so, it is not surprising that the statues of the *arhat* (*lo-han* 羅漢), or *arya* (saint), are found along the east or west walls of the Great Buddha Hall, and are worshipped together with the Buddha (Figure 7.35.).¹⁸⁸ Their presence in the hall is seen as furthering the cultivation of wisdom and spiritual insight.¹⁸⁹

The ten great disciples (*shih-ta ti-tsu* 十大弟子) of the Buddha are the most notable *arhats* in the temple. Their names and symbolism are as follows:

"1. Sariputra, She-li fo in Chinese, the disciple of wisdom; 2. Maha Maudgalyayana, Mu-chien-lien, the disciple with the greatest divine power; 3. Maha Kasyapa, Mo-ho chia-yeh, the disciple who became a leader among the monks; 4. Aniruddha, O-na-lü, the disciple with the heavenly eye; 5. Subhuti, Hsü-p'u-t'i, the disciple who can understand and explain the great emptiness; 6. Purna, Fu-lou-na, the disciple who proclaims salvation; 7. Kutayayawa, Chia-chan-yen, the disciple who is the great explainer; 8. Upali, Yu-p'u-li, the disciple who represents the mediator of the law; 9. Kahula, Lo-hou-li, the mystic; 10. Ananda, O-nan-t'o, the questioner." (Reichelt 1934: 173-4)

Among these, Ânanda and Kâsyapa, the tenth and the third great disciples, hold a special position, standing directly before the Buddha image, the former to the right and the latter to the left, and are regarded as the heralds or the spokesmen of the Buddha (Figure 7.36.). In China, Ânanda was also called Ch'ing-hsi (慶喜, "Congratulations") (Reichelt 1934: 174), or Huan-hsi (歡喜, "Joy") (Eitel 1970: 11), because he was born at the moment when the Buddha attained the state of *nirvâna*;

¹⁸⁸ As mentioned before in 2.2.3., in Hinayâna Buddhism, the arhatship represents the ideal of Buddhist life, and the belief that "No man can save another, ... and no one can save a man, save only himself." (Prip-moller 1937: 41) The achievement of the state of *arhat* does not lead to an active life of merciful service, but a passive life of pleasant contentment in undisturbed rest. Therefore, the description "He is an *arhat*" implies a self-contented person who does not trouble himself over the needs of others (Reichelt 1934: 174-5). Mahâyâna Buddhism, however, describes the purpose of the stage of bodhisattva, as being "to save others." (Prip-moller 1937: 41) In this view, the state of arhathood seems not to have been revered in Mahâyâna Buddhism as in Hinayâna Buddhism. In China, the design of the Buddhist temple is dominated by the beliefs of Mahâyâna Buddhism. That is the reason why the Arhatship, such an important stage in the spiritual path, does not have its own hall in the central avenue of the Chinese Buddhist temple, but is found in the lateral group of buildings or merely in the form of accessory images housed in the Great Buddha Hall.

¹⁸⁹ Since the *arhat* is the disciple of the Buddha and depicted in the attitude of listening to his teachings, the *arhat* image may also be found, appropriately enough, in the classrooms where the novices study Buddhism.



Figure 7.34. Marble image of an *arhat*, A.D. 1180 (Fisher 1993: 121)

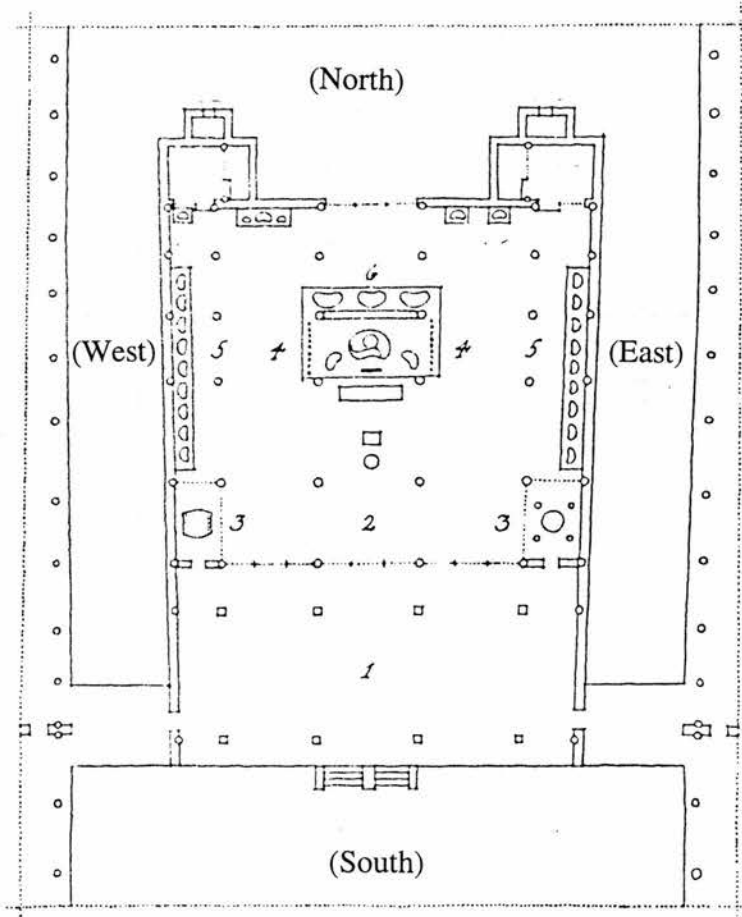


Figure 7.35. The presence of *arhat* images in the Great Buddha Hall, Chao-ch'ing-ssû, Hang-chou (Prip-moller 1937: 49)
 1. platform, 2. Great Buddha Hall, 3. bell and drum, 4. 24 Devas, 5. 18 Arhats, 6. Three Holy Ones from the West.



(Ānanda)

(The Buddha)

(Kāśyapa)

Figure 7.36. Buddha with his disciples, Ānada and Kāśyapa,
Pin-yang cave, Lung-men cave temple
(Sickman and Soper 1956: 98)

Kâsyapa received the special name, Yin-kuang (印 光, "Light"), because of the rays of light that proceeded from his body at the moment of his birth and made his body shine like gold. When they had grown up, under the teaching of the Sâkyamuni, these two became *arhats*, disciples of the Buddha. Ânanda is famed especially for his ability to memorize; Kâsyapa for his full insight. Therefore, in iconography, the great teacher is depicted placing in their hands the sutras in twelve great divisions. The exoteric doctrine to be administered for the benefit of new disciples was committed to the care of Ânanda who is portrayed as a youth, while the esoteric doctrine for advanced pupils, which can not be communicated in any definite form of language, to Kâsyapa, who is represented as an old man with bushy eyebrows (Prip-moller 1937: 40).

To sum up, the Buddhist trinity enshrined in the Great Buddha Hall is another distinctive feature of the Chinese Buddhist temple. The doctrinal basis of the trinity lies in the Three Jewels of Buddhism (*san-pao*): the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Because of this, each of these "Three Jewels" receives a resplendent image. In the early spread of Buddhism, the Buddha Sâkyamuni who is often found stationed in the centre representing the Buddha, with the Buddha Vairocana and Loshana on either side of him, symbolising the Dharma and the Sangha respectively. It was not until the T'ang era (A.D. 618-906) when Chinese sectarian Buddhism started to flourish, that the trinity combination began to vary, depending on the school to which the temple belonged. In most cases, the combination would be as follows: the Buddha Sakyâmuni in the centre with the Buddha Amitâbha to the right and the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru to the left. In this case, the trinity symbolises not only the Three Jewels of Buddhism, but also the three Governors of the Present, Future and Past Buddhist Kingdoms.

In the case of the Pure Land school, the trinity consists of the Buddha Amitâbha -- the ruler of the Western kingdom -- in the centre with the Bodhisattva

Avalôkitêsvāra to his left and Mahāsthānapārāpta to his right.¹⁹⁰ In course of time, because of the rise of the Maitrēya cult, the Bodhisattva Mahāsthānapārāpta is replaced by the Bodhisattva Maitrēya. Occasionally, a different combination of the trinity -- the Buddha in the centre and the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra to his left and right -- is also found appearing on the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall. In very rare cases, the lowest grade of heavenly deity, *arhat*, also forms a part of the trinity. An instance of this kind is the combination of the Buddha and his tenth and third great disciples Ānanda and Kāśyapa. Here, the Buddha is placed in the centre, Ānanda to the right and Kāśyapa to the left, the latter being the heralds or spokesmen of the Buddha.

As I have pointed out earlier in 5.4.4., the Great Buddha Hall represents the realm in which beings have escaped from the endless cycle of transmigration and attained the state of *nirvāṇa*. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that various trinities presented on the central altar can involve all three ranks of Buddhist deities -- Buddha, Bodhisattva and Arhat. In each of the possible combinations, these deities have their own religious justification for being placed in the trinity, but the Three Jewels of Buddhism is always what the trinity ultimately symbolises.

7.4.2. The four heavenly kings, Commander general Wei-t'o,
and two guardian generals

Right in front of the Great Buddha Hall stands the Heavenly Kings' Hall. As has been pointed out in 5.4.2., the hall, being located in this position, functions as a guard house to the Great Buddha Hall, and all the tutelary deities enshrined in this hall

¹⁹⁰ A hall on the central longitudinal axis of the temple is, in some cases, specially built to worship the Bodhisattva Avalôkitêsvāra.

serve as protectors of the Buddhist kingdom and the Dharma. In this group of guardian deities, no matter how large it is, or what nationality most of its members are, there will always be the Four Great Heavenly Kings, the Commander General Wei-t'o (韋 陀), and two guardian generals. Most frequently, all these primary deities are worshipped together in the Heavenly Kings' Hall and are perceived as serving the same protecting function. However, in some instances they may be housed separately, or linked to other religious activities in the temple. Therefore, we may come across them in different halls altogether or replicated elsewhere.

First, the "Four Great Heavenly Kings", according to Buddhist cosmology, are regarded as standing at the four corners of Mt Meru, as well as in the four continents lying at the four corners of the universe (see 2.4.2.). By acting as the protective spirits of Buddhism, they serve as the guardians of the "Three Jewels" (*sangha*),-- the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha -- as well as of the Buddhist temple itself.¹⁹¹ An example of the protection which the Four Great Heavenly Kings offer can be found in early Chinese scripture in the form of the *Fo-kuo chi* (佛國記, "Records of the Buddhist Kingdom") (18a). This records how, when, during his pilgrimage to India, the Chinese monk Fa-hsien (法顯) visited the place where the Buddha prayed for all heavenly deities, he found four heavenly kings guarding the four doors.

Within the precinct of the Chinese Buddhist temple, the names of these kings and their correspondence to the four cardinal points are as follows. Tseng-ch'ang-t'ien-wang (增長天王) guards in the South, and is associated with the colour red and fire, and is depicted holding an umbrella in his hand; Ch'ih-kuo-t'ien-wang (持國天王) guards in the West, and is associated with blue and wood, and carries a wooden

¹⁹¹ However, according to Prip-moller (1937: 20), they will not protect beings who do not believe in the true faith, i.e. the Buddhism.

musical instrument; Kuang-mu-t'ien-wang (廣目天王) guards in the East, and is associated with white and metal, and holds a sword; finally, Tuo-wen-t'ien-wang (多聞天王) guards in the North, and is associated with black and water, and carries a snake and a pearl (Meyer 1992: 79 and Reichelt 1934: 180). For typical images of these heavenly kings, see Figure 7.37.

Among these kings, the king of the North, Tuo-wen-t'ien-wang is, according to *Chu-t'ien chuan*, the deity that causes the erection of the hall within the temple premises.¹⁹² In recognition of the pose he adopts during his rescuing missions, this king is always depicted holding a pagoda in his hand and using it as a weapon. Because of this, he is known colloquially as T'o-t'a-t'ien-wang (托塔天王, "Heavenly King who Carries the Pagoda"); he is also referred to as T'o-t'a-li (托塔李), and Li-t'ien-wang (李天王) (Figure 7.38.). These names are adopted "from the terminology of the Taoists who borrowed the four kings from the Buddhists and gave them purely Chinese names" (Prip-moller 1937: 45).

The *t'ien-wang-tien*, with its four celestial inhabitants, *Ssu-ta-t'ien-wang*, is a unique and characteristic feature of the Chinese Buddhist temple. Numerous paintings of these Heavenly Kings' Halls have been found at the Tun-huang cave, each bearing testimony to their popularity and to the symbolism I have outlined. In Chinese Buddhist connotation, each of the four kings governs eight generals who have the same duty as the kings, being guardians. These thirty two generals are very likely to have derived from the thirty two gods of Trâyastrimsa Heaven¹⁹³ who correspond to,

¹⁹² The *Chu-t'ien chuan* asserts that the reason why the hall can be part of the temple layout lies in the merit of one of the Four Great Heavenly Kings. According to this account, "in A.D. 742 the Kings, especially the king of the North, came to the aid of a besieged city. In gratitude, [the T'ang Emperor Hsuan-tsung (A.D. 712-756)] issued an edict ordering that the image of the king of the North should be placed at the north-west corner of the city and that in [the Buddhist temples] a certain building should be consecrated to them." (Prip-moller 1937: 21)

¹⁹³ The Trâyastrimsa Heaven is located on the summit of Mt. Meru -- immediately above the heaven where the four kings reside.

(King of the North) (King of the South)

(King of the West) (King of the East)



Figure 7.37. Images of four Heavenly Kings, T'ien-t'ung-ssû, Ning-p'o (Chuang 1981: II, 75)



Figure 7.38. T'o-t'a-t'ien-wang, "Heavenly King who carries the Pagoda" (Lai 1986: 170)

and reside in the thirty two directions of space. According to Buddhist cosmology, Trâyastrimsa Heaven is divided in relation to the cardinal directions into thirty-two oriented sub-continent, each with its own resident god, centred on Indra's palace (Snodgrass 1985: 219). In this spatial connection, we may surmise that these thirty two gods were adopted by the Chinese Buddhists as the thirty two generals under the control of four kings.

Of these generals, Wei-t'o, one of the eight generals of the King of the South, is generally regarded as the commander. Originally, his statue was placed at the right hand side of the entrance to the Great Buddha Hall as you walk in, paired with that of the King of the North, which is located on the left. Both are *dharmapalas*, or the "Protectors of the Law", and in this arrangement, he is called Hu-fa Wei-t'o (護法韋陀). The Chieh-ch'uang-ssû (戒幢寺) in Su-chou (蘇州) has statues of Wei-t'o and the King of the North standing to the right and left in front of the main altar (Prip-moller 1937: 36). Their relative positions are shown in Figure 7.39.

In the course of time, when Wei-t'o's image was moved from the Great Buddha Hall forward to the Heavenly Kings' Hall, his symbolism changed as well: from being the "Protector of the Law", he became the protecting deity of the devotee's faith. Since this displacement, his figure has always been placed at the rear entrance of the guardian hall. Regarding the spiritual path, having passed the Wei-t'o image, the devotee has reached the Realm of Form, the Rupadhatu, where the *sambhogakaya* resides (Meyer 1992: 80). In terms of orientation, as can be seen in Figure 7.40., the image is always arranged to face the Great Buddha Hall, in which the Buddha is worshipped on the altar, so as to enhance the sense of its being a guardian of the

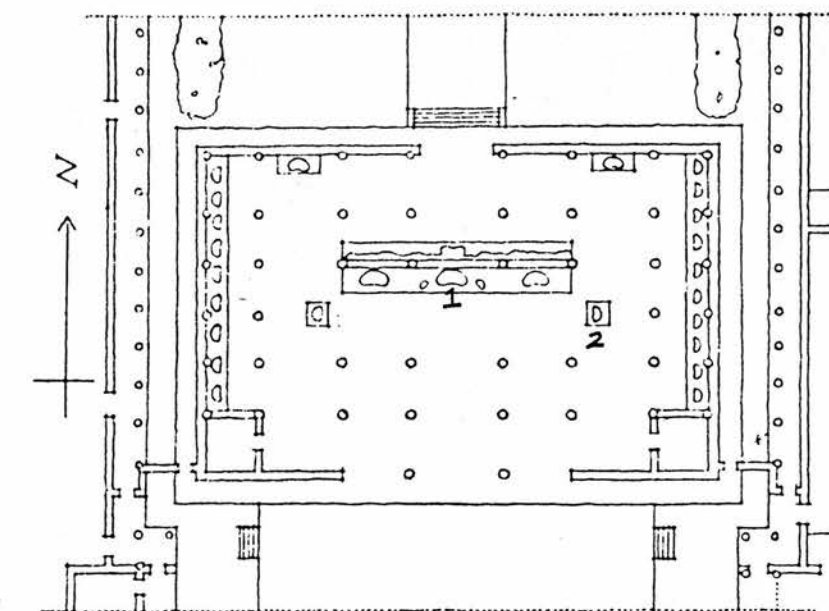


Figure 7.39. The presence of Wei-t'o in the Great Buddha Hall, Chieh-ch'uang-ssû, Su-chou (1. Buddha trinity, 2. standing Wei-t'o image) (Prip-moller 1937: 33)

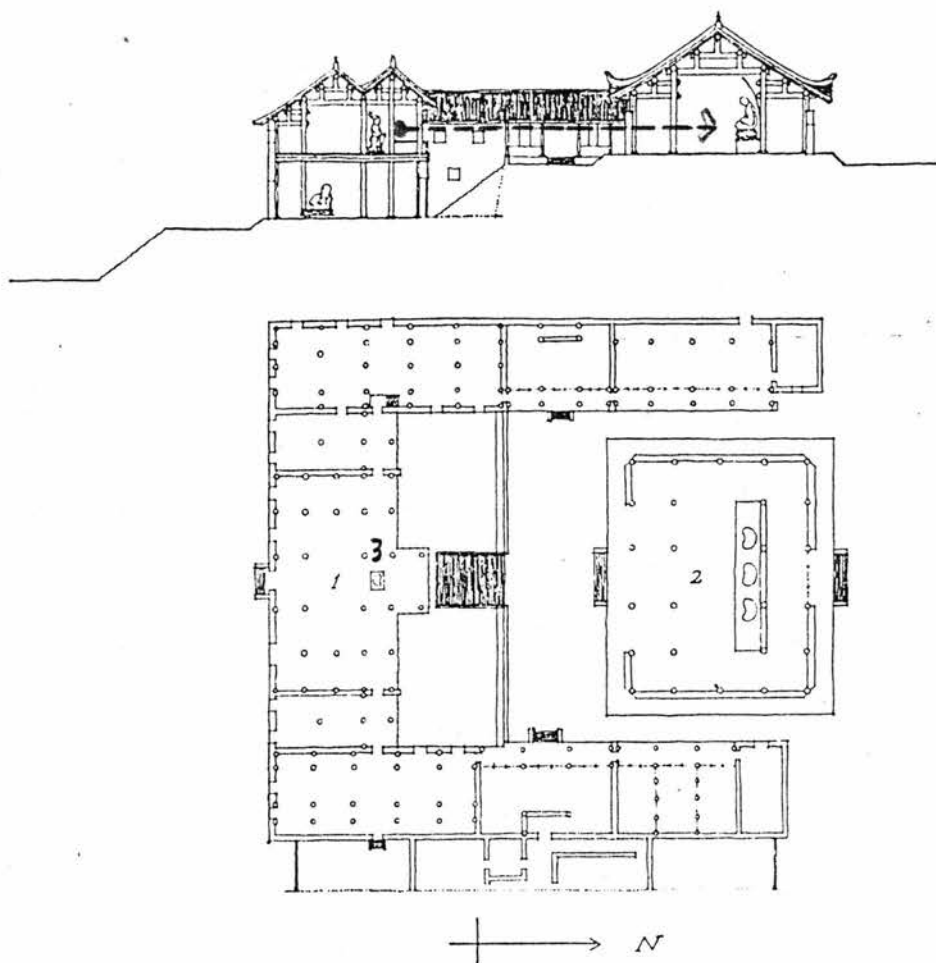


Figure 7.40. Wei-t'o image facing the Great Buddha Hall, Yu-ch'i-ssû,
Tsu-t'ang-shan (Prip-moller 1937: 25)
1. Heavenly King's Hall, 2. Great Buddha Hall, 3. Wei-t'o image.

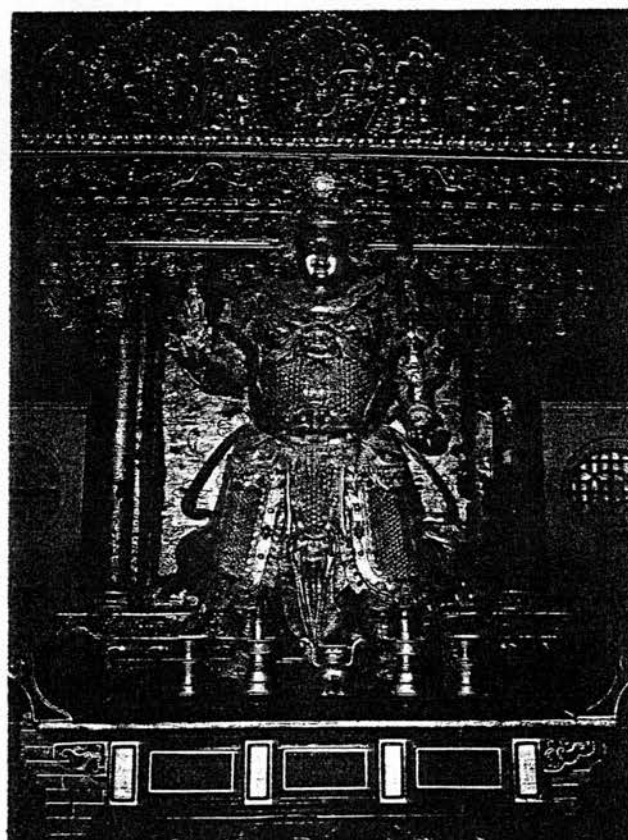


Figure 7.41. Wei-t'o image (Chuang 1981: I, 78)

Buddhist faith.¹⁹⁴ As described in *Ling-wei yao-lüeh* (靈威要略), the legend is as follows:

"Wei-t'o was born with knowledge, intelligence and wisdom, and early forsook temptation, living in Brahmanical celibacy. Facing Buddha, he was commanded as his chief task to protect the faith throughout the three continents." (Prip-moller 1937: 30)

The same idea can be seen in Chinese Buddhist temples where the Wei-t'o image is found in other buildings making it impossible to face the Buddha in the Great Buddha Hall. In these cases, a Buddha image or a painting of the Buddha will be placed in front of the Wei-t'o image instead.

It is not only the positioning of Wei-t'o that reflects his importance as a commander, but, according to *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (16), the form of his image itself. For instance, the height of the bronze statue of Wei-t'o (four feet six inches) found at the tomb of the T'ang Emperor Ching-tsung (A.D. 825-827) is greater than that of the four kings (two feet six inches). The Wei-t'o image is usually portrayed holding a club with a pearl adorning the handle (Figure 7.41.). With regards to the Buddhist faith which the Wei-t'o protects, the pearl on the handle of the club represents the Buddha's words; the point of the club symbolises the Buddha's teaching and insight (Prip-moller 1937: 30).

As to the two guardian generals, according to Eitel (1970: 206), the concept of them originally derived from the Yakshas, the guarding demons who belong to the mythology of Indian aborigines. It was taken over afterwards by Brahmanists who made these demons the bodyguards of Siva. Likewise, the Buddhists borrowed the idea from Brahmanism, and gave these demons two positions in the Buddhist temple. As indicated in *P'i-nai-na tsa-shih* (毗奈那雜事) (TSD 1118. 17), when the Buddha

¹⁹⁴ Since the Buddha's image, as a rule, will be in the Great Buddha Hall which is the next after the guardian hall.

was asked advice on decorating a garden, he says that "You shall at both sides of the gate place the Yaksha demons with clubs in their hands." (Prip-moller 1937: 19)

It was through the *Ta-pao-chi ching* (大寶積經) (TSD 23), that the guarding demons later became well-known to the Chinese Buddhist world. In this work, it is written that the ten-thousand Buddhas of our era came into being to turn the Wheel of Doctrine and two half-brothers, Mi-chi (密跡) and Chin-kang (金剛), vowed to protect them. Here, the names of the two half-brothers are in fact derived from that of one god, Mi-chi-ching-kang, or Guhyaka-Vajra. The practice of dividing one god into two is witnessed in a statement made by the Buddha: he says that "the hero Guhyaka stands to the right and left of me with diamond bell and club." (Ibid.) The division of one into two is explained in the commentary on *Chin kuang-ming ching wen-chü* (金光明經文句, "Sutra of the Golden Light") (TSD 1553). The sutra tells that:

"there is but one person; but today at the gates of a temple there are two. As, however, there is no limit to the form in which they may appear, there is nothing wrong in a number of more than one." (Ibid.)

Because of the diamond, or *vajra*, club in his hands, the Guhyaka-Vajra is called Shou-ch'ih chin-kang-ch'u (手持金剛杵, "Strong One, One who Holds in his Hands the Thunder Bolt"), or Chin-kang li-shih (金剛力士, "Diamond Hero"). Figures of the Diamond Hero have been found at numerous places in Chinese Buddhist cave temples such as the Tun-huang (Figure 7.42.), T'ien-lung-shan (Figure 7.43.), and Lung-men caves (Figure 7.44.).

In association with these two Vajra-guardians, there are two other guardians chosen to protect the Buddhist faith and sanctuaries. As indicated in both *Ta-chi ching* (大集經) and *Hua-yen ching* (華嚴經), two co-operating generals are the Narayana, who is portrayed with swords in his hands and placed to the left of the entrance, and the Kapila, who has tridents in his hands and stands to the right (Yetts 1932: III. 30). Together they are grouped under the name, Dharmapalas (達摩波羅) in China.



Figure 7.42. *Chin-kang-li-shih*, "Diamond Hero", Tun-huang cave temple
(Lai 1986: 167)



Figure 7.43. *Chin-kang-li-shih*, "Diamond Hero", T'ien-lung-shan cave temple (Prip-moller 1937: 19)



Figure 7.44. *Chin-kang-li-shih*, "Diamond Hero", Lung-men cave temple (Chuang 1980: 44)

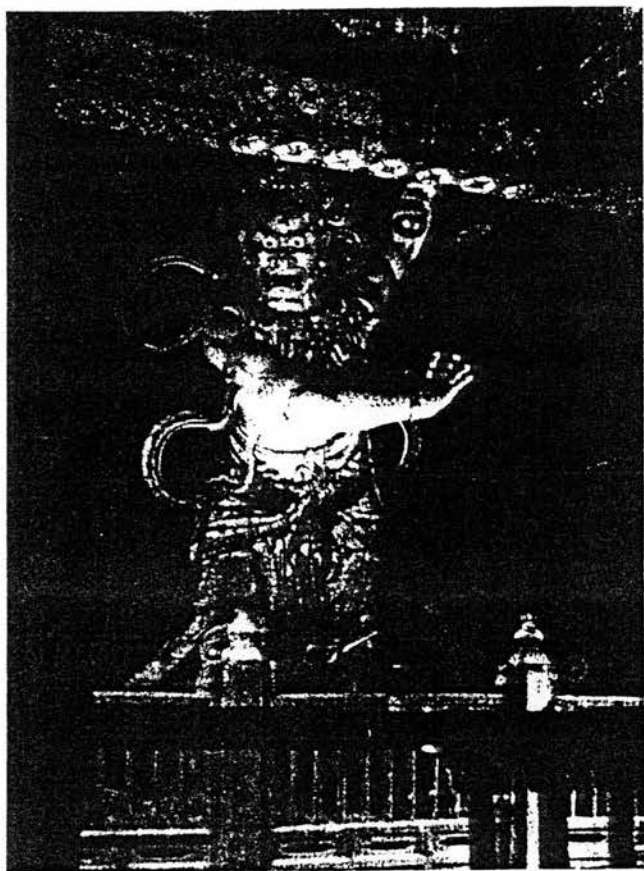
Evidence of the incorporation of these two pairs of guardians is found in one of the caves at Tien-lung-shan where there are two Vajra-guardians portrayed on the outside of the entrance door, but back to back with the two outside figures, inside the door, are the two celestial warriors, Narayana and Kapila, armed with swords and tridents.

Apart from the two guardian generals whose names are derived from their Indian precedents, we may find antecedents for them in the legendary generals mentioned in traditional Chinese folklore. Evidence that the imported Indian element was amalgamated with an existing Chinese myth is given in the *Feng-shen yen-i* (封神演義 A.D. 1695). This describes how, at the beginning of the Chou (周) dynasty, two legendary generals, collectively called Heng-Ha-erh-chiang (哼哈二將, "the Two Generals Heng and Ha"), fought each other with flames and poison gas steaming from the mouth of one and the nostrils of the other (Reichelt 1934: 180 and Prip-moller 1937: 17). Now, these two, General Ha with his mouth open and General Heng with his nostrils flaring, are frequently found placed to the left and right of the entrance to the Heavenly Kings' Hall of the Chinese Buddhist temple.¹⁹⁵ Both are portrayed either nude¹⁹⁶ or holding clubs in their hands (Figure 7.45.), symbolising their power as guardians.

To sum up, the Heavenly Kings' Hall, the second hall on the central longitudinal axis, is, symbolically, positioned at the threshold of the realms of the Brahmaloka and Caturârûpya Brahmaloka, where the supermundane Buddhist kingdom is located and the Dharma presided over. In keeping with this location, the deities, who are stationed in the Heavenly Kings hall, all serve as protectors of the

¹⁹⁵ Their place may in some cases be in the gatehouse; but most frequently they will be housed with other protecting deities in the Heavenly Kings' Hall.

¹⁹⁶ In fact, during or even before the T'ang dynasty, nude representations gained supremacy over armoured ones. In course of time, both types were found in equal numbers in temple premises (Prip-moller 1937: 20). Generally speaking, the styles of the figures, nude or armoured, only vary according to the artistic preference of different historical periods, and the symbolism remains the same, i.e. they are guardians of the temple.



(Ha)



(Heng)

Figure 7.45. Images of Heng-Ha-erh-chiang, Pi-yün-ssû, Peking
(Prip-moller 1937: 18)

Buddhist kingdom and the Dharma. Of these deities, the Four Great Heavenly Kings and the Commander General Wei-t'o are the primary ones. The "Four Great Heavenly Kings" guard the four corners of Mt Meru. In terms of their outward appearances, they are identified with certain colours (red, blue, white, and black), the four fundamental elements of the universe (fire, wood, metal, and water), and certain weapons, which are carried in their hands (an umbrella, a wooden musical element, a sword, and a snake and a pearl). According to Buddhist cosmology, each of the four kings presides over a cardinal direction and governs eight generals. In other words, under the command of these four kings, there are altogether thirty two generals, one stationed in each of thirty two spatial directions.

Of these generals, Wei-t'o, one of the eight generals of the King of the South, is generally regarded as the commander. Within the temple premises his statue can be found either in the great Buddha hall or in the Heavenly Kings' Hall. The symbolism of this deity is differently defined in each of these two halls -- in the former he is the "Protector of the Law" and in the latter it is the devotee's faith he is seen as protecting. As for his outward appearance, he is often portrayed carrying a club with a pearl adorning the handle. The pearl represents the Buddha's words, and the club symbolises the Buddha's teaching and insight.

There are also two other guardian generals who commonly feature as protectors of the Buddhist faith and sanctuaries. They are usually to be found at the entrance to the temple, by the threshold of the premises. As far as the nomenclature of these generals is concerned, there are different versions, but all of them address the same idea. Of these versions, the combination of Mi-chi (Guhyaka), and Chin-kang (Vajra), who are placed to the left and right of the entrance, in fact derives from a single Indian god called Guhyaka-Vajra. They are identified by the weapons they carry -- a diamond bell for the former and a diamond club for the latter. Another pair of

guardian generals is Narayana, who is portrayed with swords in his hands and placed to the left of the entrance, and Kapila, who has tridents in his hands and stands to the right. Also, two legendary generals, General Heng and General Ha (Heng-Ha-erh-chiang), who derive from traditional Chinese folklore, are included in the group of guardian generals. General Ha (哈) with his mouth open and General Heng (哼) with his nostrils flaring are placed to the left and the right of the entrance to the Heavenly Kings' hall; and both are portrayed either nude or holding clubs in their hands.

Appearing as they do in each of the three primary halls of the central longitudinal axis of the temple, these deities are distributed according to their power and the importance of their charges. That is to say, those perceived as most powerful will be stationed in the Great Buddha Hall as guardians of the Buddhist kingdom and Dharma; those next in rank will be in the Heavenly Kings' Hall guarding the Buddhist faith; and finally, those at the gatehouse will be dedicated to the protection of the temple itself.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis, as I have stated, is to explore the religious symbolism embedded in the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple. The doctrinal basis of the symbolism lies in the belief that the temple, in terms of its metaphysical function (See above 1.2.), is regarded as the earthly model of the heavenly temple. It is a microcosm which allows the human being to communicate with the superior state, and is the sacred place where Heaven and Earth are connected, the locus of the *axis mundi*, a vertical metaphysical channel through which two complementary forces -- the centripetal cultivative activity and the centrifugal cosmic motion -- are put into action. It is through these two movements, that is, first, the One giving birth to the Many, and secondly, the souls of the enlightened returning to the Unity, that the universe is created and evolves.

In Buddhism, belief in these two complementary cosmic forces is expressed in the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre (the One producing the Many) and Ultimate Return (the souls of the enlightened reconvening as the Unity). In the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the One, or the Centre, is defined as the Origin of the universe, the primordial Unity, the noumenon, which originates the whole phenomenal existence of the world (the Many), including the embodiment of space and time, myriads of beings, and so on. In Buddhist connotation, the Buddha who possesses the supernatural power to proliferate, filling the universe with the Buddhist pantheon (See above 4.5.), is considered as a symbol of the Centre. Likewise, the Sun, which is said to have brought forth all multiplicity into existence by radiating from it myriads of eternal solar rays, is also regarded as a symbol of the Centre. In the interpretation of the Ch'an Buddhists, this Centre is denoted as the Buddha nature which is embedded

in the innermost recesses of all beings. In traditional Chinese belief, a similar notion of cosmogenesis is preached by Taoism. In it, this Centre is identified as the T'ai-i (太乙, "Great Unity"), or the *tao* (道, "Way"), from which all multiplicity, including the T'ai-chi (太極, "Principal Unity"), its first manifestation, Heaven, Earth, Man, and the totality of existence, was created.

In the doctrine of Ultimate Return, beings of the world are regarded as suffering in an endless cycle of transmigration (See above 2.4.2.). Their salvation lies in embarkation on a spiritual journey towards the Centre, or the Unity. In Buddhist connotation, this Ultimate Return to the Centre is denoted as being Awakened, or becoming a Buddha. That is to say, the Buddha is the centre of Buddhist devotion. Proceeding on the spiritual journey, devotees pass through one stage to the next in order to attain the state of Buddhahood, the ultimate status of Buddhist deity. In Buddhism, the spiritual stages on the path are elaborately designed into four consecutive stages as follows. The first stage is the religious cultivation of the devotee towards the state of *arhat* which involves a series of spiritual practices -- preparatory cultivation, comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, and meditation (See above 5.2.). The second is when, after the devotee has become an *arhat*, he ceases to transmigrate and displays his powers of multiplication (*adhitthâna iddhi*), to prolong his life for the rest of the journey. The third is when the *arhat*, on his spiritual journey towards the state of Buddha, decides not to become a Buddha but to remain a *bodhisattva* until all sentient beings are saved from the suffering of transmigration. The fourth is the final goal of the path, that is, the achievement of the state of Buddhahood.

The Chinese Buddhist temple is a direct testimony to these doctrinal formulations, and makes its symbolic content explicitly manifest in a clear reflection of the cosmic processes essential to Buddhism. Its outward form, a gated enclosure

whose boundaries demarcate the realms of sacred and profane, and frame an invisible order which provides an oriented spiritual path both towards and outwards from the Centre, is an ideal paradigm of the transcendent truth. In the following paragraphs, with reference to the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return, I shall conclude this exploration of the symbolism of the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple, namely, orientation, axially, the form of individual buildings, and iconography. The result of this should be a clear picture of the archetypal Chinese Buddhist temple and its symbolism.

A. The symbolism of orientation and the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre

In terms of spatial organisation, the temple is essentially oriented in terms of the four cardinal directions -- North, South, East, and West. The essential characteristics of the orientation of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre is embedded are: (a) the orientation of the whole premises (which are south-facing); (b) the grouping of monks in assembly (they are divided into east and west divisions), and the abbots' quarters (also divided into east and west quarters); (c) the Diamond Throne pagoda (which consists of five pagodas, one in the centre and the others disposed along the axes in the four cardinal directions); and (d) the interior walls and ceiling of the cave, the inner and outer walls of the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall, and the facade of the Diamond Throne pagoda (each of which incorporates numerous niches, each one enshrining a Buddha image).

(a) In symbolism, the Chinese Buddhist temple, as has been discussed above, represents the sacred place where Heaven and Earth are connected, the locus of the *axis mundi*. Being situated at the junction of Heaven and Earth, the temple symbolises the centre of Earth; the space of Earth is seen as fanning out from the temple towards the four cardinal points of the compass by means of centrifugal force. In keeping with this metaphysical concept, the temple compound is essentially oriented in terms of the

four cardinal directions. Evidence of this difference with regard to the cardinal directions is revealed in the nomenclature of the temple gates, *hsi-men* (西門, "Western Gate"), *pei-men* (北門, "Northern Gate"), and so on, which are frequently mentioned in historical documents.

As far as individual cardinal points are concerned, each one possesses ample significance in the Buddhist religion. Of the four, the North, which is regarded as the projection of the Pole Star on Earth, represents the Progenitive Centre in the celestial order. This symbolism is based on the belief that the Pole Star is the apex of the celestial sphere and, to Chinese, the residence of the governor of Heaven (Shang-ti). To reflect this symbolism, the temple hall which is employed to represent the Centre of the celestial world, is placed at the northernmost end of the temple compound. In most cases, it is the Great Buddha Hall which is regarded as the spiritual centre of the temple, and is therefore found situated at this point.

In the terrestrial order, the South, which is located at the summer solstice, symbolises light, the bright side of life, *yang*. In contrast to the bright South, the North, which is situated at the winter solstice, represents darkness, the dark side of life, *yin*. To comply with this symbolism, the halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple face due South, embracing the light, and turning away from any evil influence from the direction of darkness. In accordance with the same principle, the temple compound as a whole is also oriented towards the South in order to receive the light and life from that direction.

(b) As to the East and West cardinal points, the East symbolises the spring, *yang*, increasing light, and renewal; whereas the West represents the autumn, *yin*, decreasing light, and decline. This symbolism is based on the daily course of the sun, which rises from the East and sets towards the West. Within the temple premises, the

significance of East and West is reflected in the grouping of the east and west parties of monks in the assemblies of the refectory, the Great Buddha Hall and the meditation hall, and the spatial organisation of the east and west abbots' quarters. In accordance with the symbolism which gives the East precedence over the West, in general, the monks of the East party are assigned to worship, and those of the West party, to practical activities; likewise, the East quarter is occupied by the abbot in office, whereas the West one is for abbots in retirement.

(c) Apart from these instances of deference to the symbolism of individual cardinal points, the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre is embodied within the Diamond Throne Pagoda, the general scheme of which consists of a group of five pagodas, one located in the centre and the others disposed along the axes in the cardinal directions. In terms of the form of the *mandala* which can be expressed geometrically by a circle contained within a square, the central pagoda, which is located at the central circle, represents the Progenitive Centre from which all multiplicity is brought forth into existence; the other four pagodas are situated at the four corners of the perimeter of the square, which demarcates the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Like the *mandala* it represents, the entire pagoda plan is divided by invisible perpendicular lines into nine small squares. In Buddhist connotation, each of these is ruled by a Buddha, or a Bodhisattva. The relative positions of the deities in the square reflect their status in the celestial world. The Progenitive Centre and the multiplicity of Buddhist deities are connected by lines of Breath (*prâna*) which symbolise a pneumatic net within their bodies and throughout the whole cosmos. In other words, their bodies and the world are held together by this hidden stream. The lines of Breath (*prâna*), correlated with the Buddha's Breath, symbolise the sermons of the Buddha, which are contained in the words of the sutras (*ching* 經). Within the context of the pneumatic net, the hidden stream or the Buddha's words become the Breath-cord that animates and structures the cosmos.

(d) The doctrine of the proliferation of the Buddha pantheon teaches that, in order to save all sentient beings who are suffering in the endless cycle of transmigration, the Buddha multiplied to fill the space in all directions and the three cosmic eras (*kalpas*) -- the past, the present and the future -- with countless Buddhas (Kloetzli 1989: 65). In deference to this doctrine, all over the interior walls and ceilings of the cave temple, the inner and outer walls of the Ten-thousand Buddha Hall, and the facade of the Diamond Throne Pagoda, there are numerous niches within each of which a Buddha image is enshrined.

B. The symbolism of axuality and the doctrine of Ultimate Return

As far as spatial organisation is concerned, the halls of the Chinese Buddhist temple are essentially grouped along the cardinal axes. The essential characteristics of the cardinal axuality of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the doctrine of Ultimate Return is embedded are: (a) the positioning of the primary temple buildings (on the North-South axis), (b) the arrangement of the trinity of Buddha images on the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall (on the East-West axis), (c) the hierarchy of the primary halls (on the central longitudinal axis, or the North-South axis), and (d) the Buddhist cremation and meditation practices (which reflect belief in the *axis mundi*).

(a) The North-South axis of the temple represents the spiritual path that the devotee must take to return to the Centre. The journey from South to North spiritually symbolises the sacred ascent from the mundane world to Heaven. The success of the ascent results in the escape of the devotee from the endless cycle of transmigration and the attainment of Enlightenment. Those who fail will fall back into the cycle of metempsychosis. Thus, the North-South axis represents the projection of the channel of the vertical ascent towards Heaven upon Earth. To reflect the symbolism, the

primary halls dedicated to this religious purpose (the spiritual journey of the devotee) are disposed along the North-South axis, or the central longitudinal axis of the temple.

(b) On the East-West cardinal axis, the East, central and West cardinal points locate the Buddhist kingdoms of the past, present, and future eras respectively. As revealed in the legend of the seven-week retreat of the Buddha (Cf. above 4.3.1.), the promenade of the Buddha from the East cardinal point to the West on this axis represents the supremacy of the Buddha over the whole Buddhist kingdom which extends in all directions and including the past, present, and future aeons. In Buddhist connotation, each of these three Buddhist kingdoms is ruled by a Buddha, and the area of jurisdiction of the ruling Buddha is determined by his position on this cardinal axis. That is to say, the Buddha stationed in the East is Governor of the Eastern Paradise, and the Buddha in the West governs the Western Paradise. To comply with this symbolism, the trinity of the Buddhas worshipped on the central altar of the Great Buddha Hall is arranged as follows: the Buddha on the eastern side of the central altar represents the Governor of the Past Kingdom, or the Eastern Paradise; the Buddha in the centre represents the King of the Present Kingdom; and the Buddha on the western side symbolises the Lord of the Future Kingdom, or the Western Heaven.

(c) Regarding the doctrine of Ultimate Return, to escape from the endless cycle of transmigration, the devotee, as has been explained above, embarks on a spiritual journey to the Centre, travelling through a succession of spiritual stages following the specific Buddhist hierarchy and ceremonial order. In terms of Buddhist cosmology, the threshold of the spiritual journey is situated in the realm of the phenomenal world; the second stage is in the realm of Kâmadeva, or Devaloka; and the final destination is the realm of Brahmaloaka. To reveal the symbolism, the buildings on the North-South, or central longitudinal axis, are disposed in the following sequence: first, and southernmost is the entrance gate (representing the threshold of the spiritual journey),

next is the Heavenly Kings' Hall (the second stage), and finally, to the north, the pagoda, the Great Buddha Hall, or the Dharma Hall (the final destination of the journey)¹⁹⁷. The procession of the devotee from the entrance gate to the pagoda, the Great Buddha Hall, or the Dharma Hall, is considered as a progression from the realm of the phenomenal world, via the realm of Kâmadeva, or Devaloka, to the realm of Brahmaloka where beings cease transmigrating.

(d) In Buddhism, the spiritual journey of the devotee from *samsâra* (the phenomenal world, or the suffering world) to *nirvâna* is regarded as a process of purification. Correlated with the doctrine of the threefold body of the Buddha (*san-shen* 三身), or *trikâya*, this process is considered as the spiritual sublimation of the Buddha from the apparitional humanised form (*hua-shen* 化身), via the blissful supermundane form (*pao-shen* 報身), to the luminous Dharma form (*hua-shen* 法身). In ritual, the process of purification is revealed in cremation and meditation. In Buddhist connotation, the outward flame of the cremation and the inward flame cultivated by meditation will consume all the impediments that stand in the way of the spiritual journey and enable the devotee to achieve spiritual sublimation. In this ceremony, the flame is seen as an *axis mundi* through which the devotee transcends himself, either inwardly or outwardly, from the realm of *nirmâna-cakra*, through the *sambhoga-cakra*, to the *dharma-cakra*.

C. The symbolism of the form of individual buildings

With regards to building form, the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return are embedded are: (a) the interior of the archetypal pagoda and cave (with a column

¹⁹⁷ As has been discussed before, during the early spread of the Buddhism, the final destination of the journey was represented by the pagoda. In course of time, because of the increase of Buddhist iconic worship, the pagoda was replaced by the Great Buddha Hall. Later still, owing to the decline of iconic worship hastened by the Ch'an school, the Great Buddha Hall was replaced the Dharma Hall.

placed in the centre), (b) the outward storeys of the multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagodas (odd in number), (c) the discs of the roof spire of the pagoda (odd in number), (d) the finial of the pagoda (crowned by a gourd or jewel), and (e) the inner space of the cave temple (a serene and dark place for the spiritual cultivation of the devotee).

(a) Between the realms of Heaven and Earth, as has been stated above, there is a vertical channel (*axis mundi*) through which the cosmic motions -- the One towards the Multiplicity, and the Enlightened towards the Centre -- are put into action. In terms of concrete form, this channel is manifested as a World Column standing between Heaven and Earth, which is also seen as the support of the universe. In Buddhism, both Mt. Meru and the Bodhi Tree are symbols of this Cosmic Pillar. On the basis of the correspondence between the human body (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm), the channel is also represented by the human spinal column. To reveal the symbolism, a column was erected in the centre of the archetypal pagoda and cave, symbolising both the support of the different states of existence and the *axis mundi*. Moreover, in relationship with the earth-touching hand gesture of the Buddha and the symbolism of the Diamond Thunderbolt (*vajra*), this central post is also regarded as the Cosmic Pillar that stabilises Earth.

(b) As far as Buddhist cosmology is concerned, the Intermediate Space -- the realm between the terrestrial and celestial world, where Mt. Meru is the Centre and where beings are still under the Law of Metempsychosis -- is divided into many levels of existence one above another, and extends in all horizontal directions. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the levels of existence symbolise the spiritual stages in this Intermediate Space. The final goal of the journey of the devotee passing through these stages is to reach the top of Mt. Meru where beings are exempted from the

endless cycle of transmigration. In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the Intermediate Space is radiated out from Mt. Meru (the Centre) in all directions.

The storeyed body of the multi-storeyed and close-eaved pagodas are employed to represent the realm of Intermediate Space; the storeys which are always odd in number and range from five to thirteen, represent a corresponding number of both spiritual stages and the spacial regions corresponding to the cardinal directions. In this connection, the five-storeyed pagoda, for example, signifies both five spiritual stages on the slopes of Mt. Meru and five spatial directions of the Intermediate Space. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the faith of the devotee in his pursuit of Enlightenment, the number of storeys of the pagoda is also employed to represent various universal principles and doctrines.

(c) Above this Intermediate Space is the celestial realm where beings have escaped from the endless cycle of transmigration. This is also separated into various levels, starting with the Yâma Heaven immediately above Mt. Meru and culminating in the Akanistha Heaven. In Buddhist terminology, the two broad categories of heavenly existence, or the spiritual stages in this celestial world, are the Arhat and Bodhisattva. The final stage of the celestial realm, and of the spiritual journey, is the Buddhahood -- the attainment of the final Enlightenment.

With regards to the form of individual buildings, the series of discs of the roof spire of the pagoda, whose position in the building context is the summit of the storeyed body, is employed to represent this celestial realm: like the storeys, the discs are odd in number, and range from five to thirteen, and similarly again, they symbolise a corresponding number of stages on this celestial spiritual journey. Moreover, correlated with the multiple canopies of the Cosmic Parasol, the discs of the roof spire symbolise the spiritual authority and temporal power of the Buddha.

Also, the erection of the discs of roof spire, or the Parasol, on top of the pagoda is regarded as a meritorious act.

(d) The Realm of Non-form (Ârûpyadhâtu) which is located above the celestial realm mentioned in (c) above, is the uppermost realm of the Buddhist heaven and is inhabited by the Buddha, the highest status of being in Buddhism. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, this realm symbolises the stage of final Enlightenment -- the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey. Regarding the form of individual buildings, the finial of the pagoda -- in the form of a gourd or jewel -- is employed to represent this ultimate realm, and to symbolise the Perfect Awakening, or the state of Buddhahood. Of these two forms, the gourd, as far as its function as the container of both water and other treasured substances is concerned, also symbolises the Buddha Knowledge, and, related to the notion of the immortal "Elixir of Life", the pagoda with the gourd finial becomes a symbol of immortality. With regards to its outer appearance, the gourd is formed from two spheres one above the other, and is thus regarded as the *nirvâna* point (:), symbolising metaphysically the stage of final *nirvâna*. Furthermore, when accompanied by a semicircular base, the gourd is considered as the Void point, representing esoterically the state of Void, or Emptiness.

As to the jewel finial, in association with the nature of the jewel stone (diamond -- the strongest and hardest substance in the world), this finial signifies the mighty Buddha Knowledge (*prajnâ*) which is able to smash all the ignorance and craving that beings possess. In terms of its outer appearance, the jewel finial, seems to have flames leaping from it, these symbolising the fiery radiation of the Buddha's Dharma. Moreover, it functions as the keystone of the invisible dome that encloses the pagoda (See above 6.4.2.), and thus the finial signifies that the world is illuminated by the Dharma light.

(e) As far as the daily course of the sun is concerned, the spiritual ascent of the devotee from the Realm of Desire (Kâmadhâtu) to the Realm of Form (Rûpadhâtu) is regarded as taking place between sunset and sunrise. The symbolism is testified to in the legendary battle between the Buddha and the evil Mâra in which the fight started soon after sunset, lasted for a whole dark night, and finally ended with defeat of the Mâra and the Buddha's achievement of the state of Arhat at sunrise. Within the temple premises, the cave, which is characterised as a serene, quiet and dark place for spiritual cultivation, is employed to reveal this symbolism. Entering into the dark cave from the daylight symbolises death to the Realm of Desire; finishing the spiritual cultivation and walking out of the cave back into daylight represents second birth into the Realm of Form. Correlated with the doctrine of the Egg of Ignorance, the spiritual journey of the devotee in the cave represents metaphysically the hatching of the Egg of Ignorance: being inside the cave, or embedded within the enclosure of the Egg, symbolises the nascent stage of the innate Buddha Nature; walking out of the cave, or bursting out of the Egg, represents the ascent into Enlightenment.

D. The symbolism of the iconography

Regarding iconography, the essential characteristics of the Chinese Buddhist temple in which the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return are embedded are: (a) the motif of the wheel and lotus, the spokes of the wheel and petals of the lotus, (b) the primary images of the temple, that is, the trinity, the four heavenly kings, the commander general Wei-t'o and two guardian generals (stationed in the halls of the central longitudinal axis, or the North-South axis).

(a) In terms of the doctrine of the Progenitive Centre, the entire phenomenal existence of the universe, including the embodiment of space and time, the myriads of sentient beings, and even the supreme Buddhas themselves originated from the Progenitive Centre. It is the source of creation, the primordial Unity, the noumenon,

the Principle of all things, the Origin of the universe. In Buddhism, both the Buddha and the Sun are regarded as symbols of the Centre. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, the myriads of sentient beings who were brought forth into existence from the Centre are suffering in an endless cycle of transmigration. The salvation of these beings lies in their embarkation upon the spiritual journey back to the Centre.

As far as iconography is concerned, the patterns of both the wheel and the lotus are employed to reveal the symbolism. Within the motif context, the hub of both the wheel and the lotus symbolise the Centre, or the Sun, from which all multiplicity, including space of all directions, beings, and so on, were brought forth into existence by the radiation of eternal solar rays; and both the spokes of the wheel and the petals of the lotus are employed to represent these solar ray, the medium of this cosmic transmission and reunion. The spokes of the wheel and petals of the lotus are always depicted as even in number, in order to represent the corresponding spatial directions of the world. For example, both the four-spoked wheel and the four-petaled lotus symbolise the four cardinal directions -- North, South, East, and West.

Apart from symbolising the Centre, the wheel also represents the Wheel of the Dharma (*Dharma-cakra*), the rotation of which symbolises the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma in order to save sentient beings. Moreover, the wheel also symbolises the Wheel of Existence (*Samsâra-cakra*), within which sentient beings transmigrate from one state of existence to another in an endless cycle. As to the lotus, it represents the Origin of the Buddha pantheon, the Womb of the Buddhahood (*tathâgata-garbha*), from which all the Buddhas were brought forth to fill the whole celestial world. In Buddhism, this supermundane Buddha kingdom is often manifested via the *mandala* formula. In the connotation of the Pure Land school, this Seed of Buddhahood is embedded in the lotus in the ponds of the Pure Land, and the key to the growth of the seeds lies in uttering the name of the Amitâbha Buddha. In Ch'an thinking, this Seed

of Buddhahood -- termed Buddha Nature -- resides in the innermost recess of beings, and it is by way of intuitive techniques that the devotee will awaken this Nature.

(b) With regards to Buddhist cosmology, the celestial deities who reside in the Intermediate Space of which Mt. Meru is the centre are still subject to the Law of Metempsychosis, whereas the deities who inhabit the area above it are exempted from the endless cycle of transmigration. In the Chinese Buddhist temple, the deities of the former group are primarily represented by the four heavenly kings, commander general Wei-t'o and two guardian generals, all of whose function in the Buddhist pantheon is defined as protector; the deities who belong to the latter group are principally represented by the trinity worshipped in the Great Buddha Hall, whose manifestation in this hall is essentially to reveal the doctrine of the three Jewels of Buddhism -- the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

Within the temple premises, these primary deities are disposed in the three major halls on the central longitudinal axis -- the trinity in the Great Buddha Hall, the guardian deities mainly in the Heavenly Kings' Hall and entrance gate. In terms of the doctrine of Ultimate Return, these halls are organised to reveal the specific Buddhist hierarchy and ceremonial order -- the entrance gate represents the threshold of the spiritual journey; the Heavenly Kings' Hall, the intermediate stage of the journey; and the Great Buddha Hall, the final destination of the journey. The procession through these halls symbolises the progression of the devotee in the spiritual journey towards the Centre. Here, the disposition of the deities in these halls strengthens in turn the symbolism of the hierarchy of buildings on the central longitudinal axis.

On the whole, through expressing its essential characteristics in terms of the doctrines of the Progenitive Centre and Ultimate Return, the Chinese Buddhist temple reveals its function as a sanctuary for the devotee in which he can strengthen his faith

in Buddhism and achieve his salvation. The phrase: "*kuei-i-fo* (皈依佛), *kuei-i-fa* (皈依法), *kuei-i-sêng* (皈依僧)", or "I dedicate myself to the Buddha, to the Dharma, to the Sangha", that is repeated again and again in the course of a devotee's ordination and daily worship, is the best proof of this centrality. To the devotee, the temples, as indicated in *Fa-yüan chu-lin* (法苑珠林),

"are like vessels in the bitter sea [of life] and are indeed the branches of the root of faith. The heart of those who see [the temples] will be enticed [to begin on the path of Buddhism] and will not return [to the profane world]" (Ho 1992: 79).

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EAR *Edinburgh Architecture Research.*
N *Nanjio: A Catalogue of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (Chinese). Oxford: 1883.
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